



PHD

National Identity and Immigration: The Case of Italy

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National Identity and Immigration: The Case of Italy

Submitted by Eva Garau

for the degree of PhD

of the University of Bath

7 June 2010

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Abstract

The thesis sets out to examine the debate on national identity and immigration in Italy. It analyses whether Italy, in reacting to immigration, is following any classic model of integration of foreign citizens following the example of countries such as Britain and France, or whether it has developed an alternative long-term strategy more adequate to its own situation. It also questions whether the debate on immigration has triggered a discussion on the renegotiation of the meaning of national identity, in order to make it more inclusive of minority identities within the country.

The thesis traces the debate as it emerges in the public sphere. It identifies the main actors involved, and analyses the rhetoric used by the leading voices to put forward their respective views and claims. It aims at providing a picture of the discussion within each group as well as investigating the relationship between different actors, their alliances and the dissent they express.

The role of three main actors taking part in the discussion is explored in detail, namely Italian intellectuals, the Catholic Church and the Northern League. It addresses their role in shaping public opinion and influencing the state policy-making on immigration. Through the final analysis of Italian legislation, the thesis concludes that Italy is moving towards the construction of a highly exclusive identity, where the idea of integration does not feature.

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Introduction

1. From a country of emigration to a country of immigration

Since the end of WWII, the phenomenon of immigration and the presence of refugees and asylum seekers have begun to acquire relevance in the political and social life of Western European countries. The unprecedented waves of migration were characterised by a South-North movement, which originated mainly from Northern Mediterranean countries and were directed towards Northern Europe, particularly Belgium, Britain, France, Germany and Sweden. The colonial legacy of some of these Northern European countries represented a further pull factor which attracted a considerable number of non-European nationals from the British, French and Dutch ex-colonies, who were granted special rights and preferential access to employment and citizenship. In times of reconstruction and economic development, the receiving countries often not only encouraged immigration but actively recruited a labour force through national companies and industries and through bilateral agreements with the sending countries (Triandafyllidou and Gropas, 2007: 1).

Scholars and historians of migration movements tend to agree in indicating 1973 and the oil crisis as the watershed that marks the era in which Southern European nations, such as Spain, Greece and Italy, turned from countries of emigration into countries of immigration, final destinations for those seeking better living and working conditions. This was due to international events as well as to the reaction of Northern European countries to the economic stagnation and rising unemployment which affected the whole of Western Europe, when they stopped recruiting workers abroad and in fact decided to close their doors and aim at a 'zero immigration policy' (Schain, 2008; Hollifield, 1992). Moreover, since 1989, the end of the Cold War, the Albanian crisis and the war in former

Yugoslavia contributed to opening new migration routes from the East to the West of Europe, making immigration increasingly visible in neighbouring countries such as Italy.

By that time the first countries of immigration had developed long-term strategies aimed at integrating a foreign presence which had become permanent or semi-permanent. Such models of integration resulted from both theoretical approaches to integration of difference as well as from more practical ideas of the state and its role in granting its citizens civil and political rights. The different strategies adopted by different countries were also based on specific definitions of the nation-state resulting from their individual history and traditions. Each of these first-wave immigration countries witnessed a debate on the nature of the state, on whether it had to be considered as an empty box, neutral towards different ideas of the good life, in which all should be granted freedom of expression, or rather had to be interpreted as carrying a certain set of values and moral standards traditionally derived from a shared culture and seen as indispensable for the reaffirmation of a shared national identity. In the receiving countries, the construction of coherent responses to immigration also triggered a public discussion on national identity and its transformation or evolution in coming to terms with new internal characteristics, as will be shown later in the analysis of the dominant models of integration.

Italy is among those countries that in the early 1970s started to receive more people than they were sending abroad and therefore became countries of immigration. Traditionally considered as the starting point of many diasporas, between the end of the 19th century and the early 1920s, almost 15 million Italians left their country for Northern Europe, the United States, Latin America, Canada and Australia (Biggieri, 2005:1). Italian culture has always been pervaded with a shared memory of the experiences of the ‘emigranti’, which is reflected in popular culture, cinema, music

and which contributed to create the myth of the 'Italiani all'estero' as part of the national identity (Fortier, 2000; Gabaccia, 2000). The theme of the 'patria' as 'madre' and that of the journey by boat, the images of Italians disembarking in Ellis Island and of little Italies around the world, have become part of a narrative that has contributed to creating or reinforcing a common feeling of national belonging (Krase, 2004; Patriarca, 2001). The transition that brought Italy to the status of a receiving country went unnoticed for decades, neglected by the political world and irrelevant for public opinion, at least until the early 1990s, when it exploded, unexpectedly and suddenly.

Italy, today the fourth country of immigration after Britain, France and Germany, is characterised by a 'polycentric migration population', by which is meant a population consisting of many nationalities from different parts of the world, with no one nationality or group of nationalities emerging as dominant. Indeed in 2000 the three top nationalities (Moroccans, Albanians and Filipinos) represented only a quarter of the total immigrant population, whereas for instance in Germany the three main foreign nationalities (Turks, Yugoslavs and Italians) made up 40 per cent of the immigrant population (King, 2002: 4; Caritas-Migrantes, 2000). Until recently, immigrants in Italy (2,670,514 in 2005) accounted for 2.5 per cent of the total population, a proportion that remained below the average of most European countries. Since 2008, however, foreign citizens residing in the country have risen to almost 4.5 million (6.7 per cent), which is slightly higher than the European average, albeit still far from the numbers registered in Germany (8.2). In terms of arrivals concentrated in single years, 2008 and 2009 have been the first two years in which Italy has overcome countries such as Britain, whose immigrants amount to 6.3 per cent. In terms of nationalities most represented, today the first group is that of Romanians, who represent 20.5 per cent of the total immigrant population, followed by Albanians (11.3) and Moroccans (10.4) (Caritas Migrantes, 2010: 5). Half of the foreign

population (50.8 per cent) is composed of women not only migrating to accompany male migrants but mainly as independent labour migrants employed in the domestic sector. The number of migrants is evenly distributed across the peninsula with areas of concentration in big cities, particularly Rome and Milan, as well as the most populated provinces of the centre-north. This population is characterised by a low average age, with two thirds of immigrants aged 19 to 40; while older people remain significantly under-represented, it is difficult to get a picture of the number of children, which is clearly increasing but becomes noticeable only when looking at school enrolment data, as they do not appear in the statistics since they do not have individual permits (Ibid.).

Given its new position as a country of immigration, Italy is today facing the same challenges that traditional receiving countries encountered decades earlier. However, the fact that it joined other countries of immigration late and that the level of its foreign population remained below the European average for decades, has heavily influenced the debate on immigration as well as the nature of migration policies put forward by different governments. In addition, the sudden and unexpected transformation of Italy into a final destination for migrants, has determined a difficulty on the part of public opinion in evaluating impartially the phenomenon and its consequences. This has determined a radicalisation of perceptions and assessments of the immigrant presence which has not contributed to a full understanding of the complex and dynamic reality of immigration and its various effects. On the political side, there was and to a certain extent there still is today a tendency to polarise the discussion between those generally in favour and those against immigration, which has prevented a coherent discussion on more pragmatic but also long-term solutions to deal with this new trend (Biggeri, 2005: 8-9).

The main aim of this thesis is that of investigating whether, in reacting to the growing number of arrivals, Italy has followed any

of the models adopted by other European countries. Three hypotheses are formulated here: the first hypothesis is that Italy is following one of the classic models embraced by other European countries, whether assimilation or multiculturalism or a mixture of the two, a sort of hybrid adapted to its own situation. The second hypothesis is that Italy is instead developing an original model in order to deal with immigration, according to its own cultural, historical and constitutional traditions. Finally, the third possibility is that Italy is not constructing any coherent long-term strategy nor is it opening an intellectual and political debate on the subject, but it is rather coping with the phenomenon by relying on ad hoc measures aimed at dealing with individual 'unforeseen' emergency situations. The analysis of the Italian reaction towards a phenomenon which has clearly proved not to be temporary or contingent also raises the question of whether immigration has triggered a public reflection, as in other countries, on the meaning of national identity and has contributed to the construction of a new and more inclusive sense of belonging in order to integrate the newly arrived. This work will start with an overview of the concepts of identity and otherness as presented in the literature and the dominant models of integration developed by individual countries according to their political and historical traditions, which will be presented in this introduction. The first three chapters will then explore the Italian debate on national identity and immigration, analysing the positions of, and the dialogue between, those Italian political and social actors which, for their role in the public sphere, can be expected to have an important voice in such a discussion. More precisely, the first chapter will focus on the role of Italian intellectuals and opinion makers in the debate on national identity and immigration, while the second chapter will take into account the position of, and model of integration proposed by, the Catholic Church on the same matters and the third chapter will concentrate on the model of integration developed by the Northern League. Finally, the fourth chapter will analyse the Italian

legislation on immigration in order to establish whether it has been informed by any specific model and whether any of the actors mentioned above has influenced or shaped the state's response to immigration.

Given the scope of this thesis, the methodological approach chosen is one that brings to light and explains the different interpretations of the phenomenon and the models of integration put forward by single actors as well as by the state. The research method applied here is that of discourse analysis, and more precisely discourse theory as it has been conceptualised by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe: 'Issues of identity formation, the production of novel ideologies, the logic of social movements and the structuring of societies by a plurality of social imaginaries are central objects of investigation for discourse theory' (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 2). Laclau and Mouffe argue that the only scientific method to define social groups/classes is that of not attributing to them characteristics that they do not exhibit in society, in concrete situations. The critique of social, economic and historical determinism is conducted starting from the general assumption that meanings are not fixed (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). 'Discourse theory sees all social phenomena as discursive constructions, and assumes that all social phenomena can be studied by discourse analysis. It is in this sense that discourse theory turns social phenomena into language, and language into an object for discourse analysis' (Pedersen, 2009: 5). Laclau and Mouffe's interpretation of discourse analysis results from deconstructing other theories: from structuralist linguistics they take the principle that the smallest unit in language is the sign and that discourse is a system of signs where every sign is different from the others. Following post-structuralism, they establish that the content of signs (signified) is always contingent and never fixed. Finally, Neo-Marxism inspires their belief that the 'articulation', which infuses a meaning into the signs, is embedded in a political process. If the discourse is a system of signs whose

meaning comes from the articulation, this latter has to be intended as a conflict between subjects aiming at achieving a political status by imposing a specific idea of the world, taken for granted and presented as a-problematic (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 140-142). According to them, discourse analysis can therefore be used to map this conflictual process as a political process, which involves finding the nodal points which give the signs their meaning as well as bringing to light the process of allocation of meanings. A nodal point is a central concept, for instance that of democracy, around which conflict takes place. Discourse theory assumes that all discourses are ideological precisely because they are presented as objective and therefore contribute to creating alternative realities and that meaning is created through politics and by politics. In this sense, institutions do not exist independently from discourse: on the contrary, they are purely discursive constructions without any extra-discursive status (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 130; Pedersen, 2009: 5-6):

The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expression of the wrath of God' depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 108).

To summarise, it can be said that discourse theory interprets as discourse any organised system of meanings; the elements of such a system do not exist on their own, outside the system, as they do

not have fixed and pre-existent meanings; therefore institutions or social/political groups do not have an a priori identity but as single elements of the system they acquire meaning only in relation to one another, when they form a regular configuration which turns them into 'signs'. As a result, meaning is relational and human actions acquire it through a regularly performed series of actions. If the meaning of each element is determined by its relation and interaction with the other elements in the system, then when a new signifier is added to the picture, it can only acquire meaning by establishing a relation with the other signs. In acquiring its meaning, the new signifier creates disruption in the order it finds when it first appears and therefore determines a change in the general meaning of the system as well as in that of each sign: this process is described by discourse theory as 'conflict' or antagonism (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 159-171).

Such a methodological approach becomes particularly helpful when applied to the research presented here, as it provides a theoretical framework to explain how the relations between single actors articulate and evolve. Applying discourse theory to the Italian discussion on national identity and immigration contributes to explaining how the different actors involved in the debate, be they intellectuals, the Church or the Northern League, articulate their own specific rhetoric in order to provide a coherent definition of the situation and alternative interpretations presented as 'true', 'objective' and a-problematic. Moreover, it allows us to expose the relations between these various systems of signs carrying antagonistic meanings, as well as the processes according to which they influence each other and re-negotiate through conflicts their own positioning and the general meaning of the system of meanings they contribute to form. In this sense, it allows us to deconstruct the tensions within each group of actors, for instance by bringing to light the internal contradictions and antagonistic positions of the Catholic hierarchy. Moreover, while putting the claimed objectivity of alternative realities into perspective (in their

being relative precisely because they all claim to be objective) it also allows us to understand how reality is performative, that is to say, how discourse reproduces reality while informing it.

Applying this concept to the Italian case and the debate on immigration also contributes to explain how the interpretations of the immigration phenomenon presented by the League and the Church as objective have contributed to influence public perception of the issue. Hence the adopted methodological approach helps to explain how the discourse on immigration, seemingly resulting from an analysis of a 'real' situation (number of arrivals, issues linked to law and order, etc.), contributes to shape such reality, not least by turning public fears of immigration and perceptions of migrants as a threat into something more 'real' than any statistics. By focusing on the influence of discourse on social reality and vice versa, discourse analysis brings to light the mutual dependence of rhetoric and legislation, where the former shapes the latter, while the latter stimulates the creation of a new rhetoric inclusive of revised meanings. Finally, the choice to adopt an approach that privileges the analysis of the interaction between discourse and policies justifies the decision to take into account the development of the debate as it appears in the public sphere and therefore also the choice not to carry out a systematic analysis of the media.

The public sphere, according to the definition given by Habermas (1989a), is not encompassed by the state and therefore does not coincide with it: rather, it is a theatre where mediation and dialogue between the private sphere and the authoritative state take place. The public sphere is 'a realm of social life in which public opinion can be formed' (Habermas, 1989a: 30) 'a kind of social intercourse', which allows and encourages relations between heterogeneous, multiple, overlapping and opposing views (Ibid: 36). The expression 'public opinion' refers to 'the task of criticism and control which a public body of citizens informally – and, in periodic elections, formally as well – practices vis-à-vis the ruling

structure organized in the form of a state' (Ibid: 146). This interpretation justifies the choice to base this research on the debate as it emerged in the public sphere, taking the latter as the focus, rather than the media through which the debate developed. When a systematic analysis of the media has been carried out, as in the case of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of articles and editorials published in the Northern League's newspaper *La Padania*, this was due to the relevance that the views expressed there had acquired in the public debate on immigration. This also explains why the position of political philosophers who have engaged with issues of integration and representation of minorities will only be mentioned in the chapter on intellectuals, as their voices are confined to a debate internal to their particular academic field and cannot be considered as widely relevant for the shaping of public awareness and state responses. In the same way, the position of specific individuals who are part of the collective actors taken into account will not be further investigated, for instance through interviews, since the aim of this work is not that of establishing whether their attitudes towards immigration are genuine or where they originate from. Rather, the aim of this thesis is to assess the ideas that until now have been presented in the public sphere and to analyse their impact and their consequences. In other words, what matters here is reconstructing the (contrasting) narratives on immigration and national identity in order to provide a better understanding of the state of the debate in Italy as well as to expose the conflicts, alliances and interests underpinning the public and political debate and assess their impact on the Italian legislation on immigration.

The analysis of the debate on national belonging and the immigrant presence within the country addresses the main question of whether Italy is following a specific model of integration, whether elaborated from within or imported from other countries, or is instead proceeding on an ad hoc basis. If a specific model has indeed been elaborated and is being applied in national legislation,

the question to be asked is whether the development of such a model has triggered a discussion on the need to re-define 'Italianness', in order to make it a more pluralist concept and one that is more inclusive of minorities.

Before moving to the analysis of the Italian case, it is necessary to look briefly at the theoretical and ethical debate on identity, rights and justice and how it has informed the responses to immigration in countries such as France and Britain. The following section will provide an overview of the main issues related to the representation of minority groups as they have been addressed in the complex and articulated dialogue between liberals and communitarians. It will address the main positions of, as well as criticism, directed at these two strands of thought, as well as the models they inform: assimilation and multiculturalism. It is of central importance to define these models, as they will be used as a useful paradigm to assess the Italian position(s) on the issue. Thus the wider debate on individual and collective identity and the role of the state in promoting justice and equal opportunities is relevant as it will represent a term of comparison and will contribute to highlight, as we shall see in the course of this thesis, both the absence of a similar debate in Italy and its occasional appearance, generally in highly critical and dismissive terms, in the discourse of some actors, notably the Church and the Northern League.

2. The debate on identity and justice: liberalism v. communitarianism

The second half of the twentieth century has been characterised by an increasing presence, in the political scene of western democracies, of organisations and movements representing the claims of disadvantaged groups, such as African – American and Native Indians and other ethnic, cultural and religious minorities as well as social groups such as women, gays and lesbians. The demands and the ideologies of these social movements and minority groups have triggered a systematic debate on the concept of identity, its origin, nature and meaning, as well as the different issues linked to and derived from it, such as the current and future status of the particular identities being claimed and defended by these groups. The politics of identity put forward by contemporary democracies is strictly connected to the ideas of oppression and discrimination which presuppose the vulnerability of the minority group in the face of cultural imperialism as well as its experience of stereotyping, 'violence, exploitation, marginalization and powerlessness' (Young, 1990: 39). In demanding access to civil rights and acquiring visibility in the public sphere, members of minority groups went through a process of consolidation of group identities, increasing identification with social and cultural categories and thus reinforcing self-sameness. Claims for protection and representation indeed required a strong sense of belonging to an organised group sharing ethnic or cultural traits, which could act in a unitary manner in the struggle to achieve public recognition. This resulted in the representation of identities alternative to the mainstream ones and also 'fixed', exhibiting predictable and unchangeable common characteristics. In this sense, being gay, lesbian, black or women became a stereotyped and monolithic identity, characterised by immutable traits (Calhoun, 1995: 193-199). To a certain extent, identification with a close community was the price minority groups had to pay in order to be recognised as such and granted access to rights and resources,

and in this sense the simplification of representation was accepted by marginalised communities as transitory and functional to the achievement of immediate goals (Moller Okin, 1989; Young 1990). This contributes to explaining how, for decades, the constitution of identities has been presented as a harmonious process resulting in 'stable and minimally changing identity' (Calhoun, 1995: 218). As a result, the struggle and the tensions involved in the forging of identities and the fact that identities are fragmented was underestimated until relatively recently. However, more recent approaches have converged towards a systematic deconstruction of essentialist interpretations of social, ethical and religious groups, stressing the importance of multiple, conflicting or complementary identities and their respective and often conflicting demands (Ibid.).

Since the 1970s, the debate on identity and participation has been polarised between two main interpretations aimed at finding a solution to issues of recognition, integration and participation in the public sphere. On the one hand, the liberal perspective, traditionally linked to the ideas of philosophers such as John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Jeremy Bentham (1748 – 1832) and further developed by John Rawls in his *A Theory of Justice* (1971) interprets identity as individual and universal. On the other hand, the communitarian interpretation of identity, articulated as a critique of the liberal approach, and formulated by philosophers such as Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, Michael Walzer and Alasdair McIntyre, views belonging as local, relative and collective. These two approaches reflect and inform different models of citizenship and integration put forward by Western democracies to foster inclusion and participation in the public sphere, to grant rights and access to resources as well as create a shared feeling of belonging. Before addressing the models resulting from liberal and communitarian interpretations of belonging, and particularly assimilation in France and multiculturalism in Britain, it is worth looking at the specific contents of these two perspectives.

In trying to identify the process according to which rights can be claimed by different individuals, Rawls developed a theory of justice based on the idea of 'the original position', according to which citizens have to imagine themselves as being in the position of equal and free persons who agree on general principles of social and political justice. The main characteristic of the original position is that 'a veil of ignorance' prevents participants from being allocated specific social and historical circumstances, which they ignore when making choices on fairness and desirable forms of participation. The role of the veil of ignorance is that of allowing impartiality of judgments when the subjects in the original position are demanded to choose between different ideas of justice that best represent and serve their interests. According to Rawls, the most effective and rational choices are achievable when taking into account two principles of justice. The first guarantees citizens equal basic rights and liberties necessary to pursue their different conception of the good life. The second provides equality of educational and employment opportunities while granting all of them minimum income and wealth to pursue their interests and to maintain their self-respect. When 'blind' citizens, unaware of their specific cultural, ethnic and religious circumstances, make choices on the allocation of resources and the type of participation they judge best, they will tend to include as many groups of people as possible among those who will be given access to rights, since they do not know in which situation they will have to live.

Rawls argues that the principles of fair justice can be identified through rational individual choices. In this respect his theory of justice is somewhat close to the utilitarian approach to justice and representation, based on the idea of granting the highest level of happiness to the highest number of people (Bentham, 1781). This liberal theory of justice originates from the concept of an ideal autonomous subject who 'successfully and rationally extricates himself from the entanglements of history and the characteristics and values that come with the entanglement' (Bell, 1993: 29). The

idea of a subject or citizen as a self-sufficient agent who chooses a life-plan and employs his/her will to pursue it, rests on the assumption that life is a result of individual rational decisions. In this sense, liberal theory does not take into account collective identities: rights are given to individuals on the basis of their choices, their demand for participation and the acknowledgement of their presence in the public sphere as individuals.

An inherent aspect of liberalism is that the state is presented as indifferent to any set of values or specific backgrounds that characterise the single citizens, neutral towards different interpretations of the good life, which liberalism defines as a life that is worth living. Criticism of this interpretation of the role of the state as purely procedural comes from within liberalism itself as perfectionist liberals admit that the state should not be an empty box but should rather provide a minimum common denominator in terms of values which allows citizens to develop a sense of belonging and loyalty. However, both strands of liberalism still consider the individual as the only beneficiary of rights (Galeotti, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995). Liberal utilitarianism has been criticised for not being applicable, as the idea of achieving the highest happiness for the majority of people has proved to be lacking rationality. Indeed, it can justify intolerant and cruel practices, as in the example of a community of twelve people where ten members link their happiness to torturing the other two. In this case, torture would be the utilitarian response to the popular will (Bell, 1993: 78).

Neutralist liberalism and Rawls' theory of justice have been criticised by communitarians for their atomistic and abstract conception of the individual as a rational agent. Firstly, communitarians have argued that the idea of an abstract good life lacks substance, which explains why liberals do not provide examples of what they mean by it; secondly, making choices implies a judgment of different alternatives, which can only be

made according to some sort of moral orientation. The possibility of choosing is only given when the subject has already learned a specific idea of the good, a framework which defines the type of life s/he aims to live. It is then the social worlds in which human beings are immersed that offer the moral horizon which determines what is worth achieving or being (Taylor, 1989, pt.2). This is the reason why 'we cannot make sense of our moral experience unless we situate ourselves within this given moral space' (Bell, 1993: 37). Communitarians' critique of liberalism is based on the idea that human beings are ultimately social creatures, political animals, as they define them using Aristotle's definition (Barnes, 1984). Moreover, they reject the idea that human beings use rationality in order to decide what values matter most and consequently plan their lives. According to them, the highest attachment of individuals goes to their community, which can range from the family to a religious group, and does not require a rational choice, but rather assumes a 'pre-conscious' *modus operandi*, which is further influenced by the specific social and historical characteristics of the particular time and environment in which the subject lives. Rational choice intervenes only when the unreflective routine of everyday life is interrupted by an unusual event that creates a conflict between different pre-conscious values (Heidegger, 1927: 213; Bell, 1993: 33).

Communitarians believe that different groups based on ethnic, religious or sub-national shared identities should be given recognition as such in the public sphere and therefore the state should not be neutral towards their demands. Moreover, according to them, the state can never be really neutral as, in demanding citizens to leave all differences (such as religion, sexual orientations, ethnic background) out of the public sphere so that they do not interfere with the process of decision making, it proves to privilege mainstream groups, namely, in Western democracies, the so-called WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant and mainly male citizens). These inner characteristics do not need to be left out

of the public sphere as they are shared by the majority of the population and therefore are not perceived as different, whereas black, Muslim or gay citizens would be allowed to enter the public sphere not in the name of their identities but despite them (Galeotti, 1994). Communitarians have been accused of essentialism by feminists and post-structuralists, who argue that, in identifying human beings mainly as members of specific groups, they do not take into account that oppression often comes from within the community, when members are marginalised or not allowed to leave when they come to a rejection of the communities' values (for instance in a patriarchal family or in ethnic groups where dissent is considered as betrayal) (Young, 1990; Moller Okin, 1989; Kymlicka, 1995). In responding to this charge, communitarians argued that participation in one group does not exclude simultaneously belonging to other groups since loyalty stretches to more than one community and attachment to the family does not conflict with attachment to a religious group, a region or a nation (Sandel, 1982: 150; Anzaldúa, 1999). However, at the same time they define the breaking of ties with the community as a 'self-defeating' experience (Bell, 1993: 100-103), diagnosing those who lose this identification and commitment to the group as going through 'a painful and frightening experience' (Taylor, 1989: 26-7).

Finally, communitarians have been criticised for their inability to give a positive definition of the concept of community. This gap was filled by a central work for communitarian thought: Martin Bell's *Communitarianism and its Critics* (1993), in which the author identifies three types of communities: communities of memory, communities of place and psychological communities. Communities of memory, such as the nation, are based on their history, their common past, but also the future: 'beside tying us to the past, such communities turn us towards the future as communities of hope' (Bell, 1993: 125). Members aim at realising the ideals and the projects embedded in the past of such communities as a contribution to the common good (Bellah et al.,

1985: 153). Communities of place are characterised by proximity and locality and usually by a common language, whereas psychological communities do not require geographical boundaries or shared memories but are rather based on personal interactions in small groups such as the family, church groups, civic associations and work units (Bell, 1993: 172). Once again, however, the idea of constitutive communities has been criticised by gay/lesbian groups as it represents a limit in the definition of groups that should be recognised in the public sphere, by presenting other belongings of affiliation as 'interests groups', groups based on a single aim or interest and whose members do not share a deep common identity (Young, 1990). Finally, the communitarian interpretation of collective identity has been dismissed as relativistic in its attributing equal value to a broad range of groups. If liberals argue that rational choice is good *per se*, communitarians believe that difference in itself is a value: both positions have been perceived as dogmatic (Kymlicka, 1993). To conclude, communitarians think that rather than taking the 'original position' as the only condition to make rational and therefore fair decisions on representation and participation, we should instead judge what identity is by using the 'final position'. The citizen in the final position, which is the deathbed, can look back at his/her life and only then, after s/he has lived that specific life in a particular place and historical time, can decide what really mattered, what s/he was really attached to or, in other words, what constituted his/her identity as a social being (Bell, 1993: 187).

3. Assimilation and multiculturalism

‘Tolerance’ of religious, ethnic and inter-personal behavioural differences is the leitmotif of Western societies and their attempt to accommodate difference. Yet ‘despite this reputation for liberalism there can be little doubt that, in the past decade or so within Western countries, there has been an increasing awareness of, and a hardening of attitudes towards people who are “different” and, in particular, towards immigrants’ (Borooah and Mangan, 2009: 34). Since the aftermath of World War II, traditional European receiving countries have adopted different long-term strategies to react to the growing number of arrivals resulting from their colonial legacy as well as their active recruitment of labour force (Fernando, 2009: 379). The presence of foreign nationals triggered a debate on integration and coexistence as well as on the role of the state and whether it should demand immigrants to adapt to the culture of the country of arrival or whether it should encourage them to retain their specific characteristics and grant them recognition as members of minority groups (Entzinger and Biexveld, 2003). This section will provide a brief overview of the two main Western European models of integration, assimilation in France and multiculturalism in Britain, while highlighting how the liberal and communitarian perspectives on citizenship described above inform them.

Assimilation requires the absorption of minority cultures into the mainstream culture and is aimed at maintaining an ideally mono-cultural and mono-faith society, an approach that implies the loss of the main characteristics of the absorbed group. Legally all citizens are recognised as French citizens as opposed for instance to French Arabs (Borooah and Mangan, 2009: 34-36). When addressing the concept of assimilation, scholars tend to agree on the need to distinguish between structural assimilation and cultural assimilation. Structural assimilation measures the level of participation of individuals or groups in national institutions,

assessing for instance their voting behaviour, whereas cultural assimilation looks at values and cultural orientation and the acquisition of a sense of belonging on the part of immigrants. Structural assimilation and cultural assimilation do not necessarily go hand in hand, as foreign nationals can take part in the institutional life of the country while maintaining a separate moral and cultural attachment to a specific minority group or to the country of origin (Gordon, 1964). The French conception of citizenship stems from a historical and constitutional tradition based on the myth of the Republic, which implies the possession of a rich legacy of memories and values that presupposes ‘a past and present-day consent and desire to live together’ (Renan, 1990:19). The nation is characterised by its ambition to transcend particular minority identities, such as affiliation to historical, ethnic, religious, economic and social groups. Such an abstraction is pursued through citizenship intended as individual and universal at the same time. This does not mean that rational modern citizenship does not have to confront pre-existing national features linked to a specific history and culture. The French idea of citizenship is both contractual and cultural, a dual nature that is not only abstract (Schnapper, 1994:49).

Historically, assimilation originates from the pre-revolutionary *ancien regime*, when the Kingdom of France was unified and the inhabitants of the various regions and counties were integrated into the French state (Sahlins, 1989). French national identity is also based on the values of equality, freedom and fraternity as well as on *laïcité*, the separation between the state and the Church, implemented in the Third Republic (1870-1940) when a rigid distinction between individual culture and religion, confined to the private sphere, and the secular state was introduced (Weil and Crowley, 1994: 112). The same values have inspired the French Empire, its colonial expansion during the Third Republic and its civilisation mission, which predicated the intrinsic superiority of French culture and justified its imposition onto ‘less civilised’

cultures (Conklin, 1997). As Haddad and Balz explain, ‘while *mission civilisatrice* no longer explicitly figures in French political discourse, the idea that French culture is inherently superior to the culture of immigrants remains a key element of French policy’ (Haddad and Balz, 2006: 25). Immigrants, the majority of whom come from the ex colonies, are expected to fully assimilate into French society as quickly as possible by actively giving up their former identities and voluntarily embracing a ‘single, exclusively French identity’ (Ibid.). Indeed, the Republican model of integration does not contemplate the possibility of hyphenated identities: it assumes that multiculturalism has fostered racism and segregation in those countries which adopted it and particularly in Britain. The fact that there are ‘no immigrants or aristocrats but only French men’ is based on the idea that the Republic is one and indivisible as stated in the 1958 Constitution (Ibid.).

The same strictly assimilationist perspective informs immigration policies and nationality laws, which in France have traditionally been characterised by a combination of *jus sanguinis* and *jus solis*, where the first grants citizenship to the children of citizens, regardless of where they were born and the second extends it to all persons born in the national territory (Brubaker, 1992). According to some scholars, the liberal Republican rhetoric and the policies regulating nationality, citizenship and immigration have recently moved towards a more culturally and racially essentialist position (Fassin 2006). This was due to the emergence of right-wing political parties such as the *Front National*, founded in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen, and to the increasingly strong differentiation between ‘commensurably different’ and ‘incommensurably different’ immigrants and particularly Muslim immigrants (Silverstein 2004). With an increasing tendency towards a racialisation of its citizenship (Blanchard and al., 2005), the Republican project of individual and rational citizenship had discovered the limits of its ‘universal promise’ (Fernando, 2009: 385), as showed by the heated debate on the headscarf and the 2005

riots in peripheries of French cities (Haddad and Balz, 2006). Globalisation, it appears, has determined what Balibar (2004) calls 'the impotence of the omnipotent'.

When defining multiculturalism, scholars distinguish between 'soft multiculturalism' and 'hard multiculturalism': the former is commonly defined as 'a natural extension of democratic values such as tolerance and respect for diversity', whereas the latter is characterised by the emphasis it places on collective identities, the dimension of group belonging and the supremacy of the community over the individual (Borooah and Mangan, 2009: 35; Barry, 1999). Finally, a 'middle view' sees multiculturalism, intended as acknowledgment and toleration of differences and cultural expressions, as the only feasible response to the increasing mass migration and to the presence of ethnic minorities within the borders. Britain, perceived as the multiculturalist country *par excellence*, follows an interpretation of multiculturalism based on the extension of rights and legal recognition and even special protection to minority groups and individuals by virtue of their belonging to those groups (Borooah and Mangan, 2009: 35). Historical tradition and national myths play a lesser role in Britain: multiculturalism is not necessarily seen as deeply linked to a still much debated 'Britishness', although British multi-layered national identity is to a certain extent also based on an anti-racism resulting from a tradition of toleration and accommodation of difference. Thus negotiations on race relations and the rejection, at least in principle, of racism have been promoted as a distinctive British model of citizenship (Weil and Crowley, 1994: 112; Lewis, 1988). The fact that in Britain the construction of the nation-state did not develop in relation to the integration of immigrants as it did in France and the fact that the nation 'as a geographical and cultural entity' was unrelated to the construction of the nation as a political entity, does not mean the British model was created 'in a vacuum' (Weil and Crowley, 1994: 113). British traditional attention to 'accommodation' of difference, shown in centuries of political

compromise to solve religious conflict, is combined on the one hand with a pragmatic agenda which privileges 'community –based solutions [over] minority issues and, on the other hand, with the liberal idea of keeping racism and race-based controversies out of the political sphere as much as possible' (Ibid.).

Albeit partially informed by the liberal idea of equality of citizens, British multiculturalism seems more concerned with the communitarian idea that members of minority groups should be given visibility and space in the public sphere in the name of their belonging to disadvantaged or under-represented ethnic or religious affiliations. In this sense, the conflict outlined in the USA on whether the first Amendment of the Constitution, which advocates freedom of speech, should prevail over the fourteenth, which protects the right to equal treatment, is solved by the British approach in favour of the second principle (Favell, 1998: 263). The main criticism addressed to multiculturalism has been that of being based on a dangerous relativism which inevitably leads to the alienation of minorities and to their ghettoisation (Betts, 2002: 9). Moreover, according to its detractors, multiculturalism endangers the unity of society (Rex and Singh, 2003:4), a concern seemingly shared by British 'public sentiment' (Borooah and Mangan, 2009). Recent debate on the failure of multiculturalism has indeed brought to light a growing concern resulting in a visible change in official policies, as shown by the fact, for instance, that the 2000 multicultural Commission of Multi-Ethnic Britain 'was quickly tempered by the calls for building cohesive communities and a quest for "Britishness"' (Singh, 2003: 53). Some scholars and political scientists argue that, even if multiculturalism and assimilation are often considered as irreducibly opposed to each other, France and Britain are actually moving towards a similar approach to inclusion. On the one hand, the French state, following the riots in the *banlieue* and the claims put forward by its Muslim citizens, has started recognising the need to acknowledge difference, while, on the other hand, British multiculturalism is

seemingly moving away from a system that, when applied, ran the risk of creating segregation towards a system where difference has to be confined to the public sphere (Kymlicka, 1993). However, others think that ‘there is no need for convergence’ and that indeed France and Britain will retain their antagonistic models based on a liberal and anti-communitarian ideological approach and on a communitarian short-term pragmatism respectively (Weil and Crowley, 1994: 124).

As mentioned earlier, this overview on the origins of the main models of integration as they have been developed in traditional countries of immigration is meant to provide a general term of comparison for the analysis of the Italian approach to the same issues. It thus represents a starting point and a premise necessary in order to answer the main research questions of this thesis: what model, if any, is Italy following in responding to immigration? Is it following one of the models presented above, a combination of the two or is it putting forward an alternative model? And finally, to what extent did the Italian approach to the growing number of arrivals include opening and promoting a debate on the need to re-negotiate national identity and make it more inclusive? The following four chapters will try to answer these questions.

Chapter I focuses on the role of Italian intellectuals in the public debate. It establishes that intellectuals have been unable and/or uninterested in elaborating a possible model of integration or even in putting forward coherent interpretations of the phenomenon of immigration. It also addresses the seeming paradox that Italian writers, journalists and opinion makers, despite representing a leading voice in the discussion on the need for a renewed sense of ‘Italianness’, indispensable in their view in order to reconcile conflicting memories, do not interpret immigration as relevant in their reflection on national belonging. The chapter explores the reasons behind this attitude. Chapter II looks at the Catholic Church and its position on immigration as well as the most recent

changes in its representatives' attitudes towards the newly arrived. It brings to light and explains the shift from a traditionally welcoming approach derived from Catholic doctrine, according to which all immigrants have to be loved and helped as much as possible, to a new interpretation based on selective solidarity, according to which inclusion depends on the acceptance of Christian values. The chapter analyses the position the Church has adopted since 2000 in order to establish whether, in participating in the debate, it is putting forward a specific and original model of integration, and, if so, what the nature of such a model is. Chapter III addresses the Northern League's discourse on national identity in relation to immigration and analyses how this position evolved from the early days, when the party was still struggling to gain national visibility, to what it is today. The model the party put forward more recently cannot be considered a model of integration as such, but it is rather defined here as a model of 'institutionalised exclusion'. Through the analysis of the League's rhetoric on immigration as it emerges from the articles and editorials published in *La Padania* in the last three years, the chapter examines the principles this long-term strategy is based on, as well as the possible consequences of its implementation. Finally, Chapter IV focuses on Italian legislation on immigration. It aims at unveiling the processes according to which the actors analysed in the previous chapters have influenced the conceptualisation, approval and implementation of norms and laws that deal, directly or indirectly, with immigration and with the recognition of minorities' rights. It assesses whether the responses of the Italian state represent a coherent model of integration or whether it is not possible to identify in the legislation an ideologically oriented long-term strategy. In order to establish whether it is possible to talk about an Italian 'model', it will assess the influence of the actors involved in the debate on the legislative process and the conflicts which surrounded the approval of the various measures.

Chapter I

Italian intellectuals and the debate on national identity

1. Introduction

Since the end of World War II and until very recently, there have been only sporadic discussions on Italian identity and all have been characterised by a general weakness of arguments and lack of consistency (Cartocci, 1994; Galli della Loggia, 1996). According to Galli della Loggia, a prominent Italian intellectual who writes regularly for the *Corriere della Sera*, the neglect of the themes of the nation and its culture had reached extraordinary proportions by the 1980s, to the extent that the issue of the relation between the nation and the state as well as the political system had been almost completely sidelined by historians (Galli della Loggia, 1996).

This chapter aims to investigate the causes behind the general lack of interest on the part of Italian intellectuals in these issues during the past years as well as to analyse the current state of the debate on the significance and content of a specifically Italian ‘national identity’. It will start with the attempt to identify the circumstances which caused a revival of the discussion among Italian intellectuals (Cartocci, 1994; Melotti, 2004). It will then consider why a shared feeling of Italianness has been judged to be going through a deep crisis.

More precisely, this thesis intends to focus on the relation between national identity and immigration and on the debate on whether and to what extent the arrival of immigrants in the country has determined, or is seen as in need of determining, a re-negotiation of the concept of national identity, in order to make its content and meaning more inclusive of the different ethnic groups and cultures. It will try to prove that the debate on the influence of immigration on Italianness has been and still is quite meagre, arising out of occasional diatribes as well as causing bitter controversies, rather than engaging systematically with issues of

integration and inclusion (Melotti, 2004). In order to find the reasons for such a lack of interest on the part of intellectuals, the analysis will examine the different perspectives from which the issue of national identity has been approached in recent years. The intention of this investigation is to show how the discussion on certain themes, such as the legacy of the Resistance and the role of political parties in post-war Italy, determined a shift of focus toward inward-looking perspectives. This prevented the analysis of the impact of immigration from taking centre stage in the debate on the need for a renewed sense of nationhood. In this context, there have been hardly any arguments in favour of a departure from old understandings and uses of the concept of national identity.

This chapter will hence be organised into two separate sections which will examine quite different historical and political issues, which, nonetheless, share the common trait of having triggered various debates on Italianness in the last two decades. The first section will address historical events such as the different interpretations of the Resistance, the military capability of the Italian army during World War II, the role of political parties in post-war Italy and particularly the relationship between the Italian Communist Party with Yugoslavia after the war. The second section will focus on relatively recent internal political issues and will take into account the rise of political actors, such as the Northern League, the long-standing divide between the North and the South of the country, the importance of family belonging, the resilience of political subcultures. A third section will finally focus specifically on the (largely missing) link between immigration and national identity while outlining the unfolding development of the discussion between Italian intellectuals. This section will assess the contributions made by academics, journalists and philosophers respectively to this debate, and will argue that, rather than engaging in a dialogue, they have put forward mainly individual and unrelated views and proposals. There are certainly journalists and academics who are discussing the theme of immigration, as for

instance journalist Magdi Allam in the daily *Corriere della Sera*. Nevertheless the discussion on the likely impact that this relatively new phenomenon is going to have on the shared meaning of nationality and national belonging is weaker than could be expected and does not seem to aspire to become exhaustive or systematic. Rather, it is characterised by occasional and episodic polemics arising out of specific events. Moreover, Italian intellectuals are not seemingly reflecting on the weakness of the debate itself nor are they trying to account for the neglect of the subject.

This work will attempt to fill the gap in the missing relation between immigration and current debates on national identity by explaining why Italianness is taken as an unproblematic concept which runs the risk of alienating new groups of citizens or proving unable to integrate them. It will try to identify several answers to the question as to why Italian identity is not being discussed systematically or being put in relation with the phenomenon of immigration. The discussion of the internal factors mentioned above and their influence on the (re-)construction of an Italian identity contribute to keeping the focus of the debate on internal factors and do not leave space to consider other elements, in this case seemingly external elements such as immigration, which are nevertheless affecting the concepts of Italianness, patriotism and citizenship. Political parties also play a central role in evading the issue of the influence of immigration on national cohesion, solidarity and ultimately identity, since they attempt to instrumentalise immigration by putting it into interpretative categories which respond to their electoral needs.

2. The role and crisis of the intellectual

Before going into the question of Italian intellectuals and their role in the debate on national identity and immigration, it is necessary to reflect albeit briefly on the meaning of the term intellectual, in order to make clearer what category of individuals this chapter is going to refer to.

Despite the many attempts to define the nature of intellectuals, the use and meaning of the term today remain controversial and certainly not univocal. That of intellectual represents a concept in permanent evolution and still under scrutiny, as proved by the broad literature on the theme. Originally used as an adjective to contrast intellectual and manual work, the term is tightly linked with the Dreyfus Affair in France, where for the first time it is defined in its modern meaning as an expression referring to an individual or a particular category of individuals. Even though the word had already been used, in Britain for instance to describe the poet Byron in 1813 (Williams, 1988: 169), in the Western world of the nineteenth century it took a different connotation. As a consequence, according to some scholars, such as Jennings and Kemp-Welch, it is not possible to talk about Medieval or Victorian intellectuals in a retrospective way. It is with the Dreyfus Affair that the necessary condition to be an intellectual includes for the first time a call for action – in that case it was the action of writers such as Emile Zola, André Gide and Marcel Proust, who took the responsibility to intervene publicly in political matters (Jennings and Kemp-Welch, 1997:7).

Scholars tend to agree that the main reference point in the debate on intellectuals is represented by the interpretations of the concept provided by Julian Benda and Antonio Gramsci in 1927 and between 1926 and 1937 respectively (Said, 1994; Jennings and Kemp-Welch, 1997). In his *La trahison des clercs* (1926) – ‘The Betrayal of the Intellectuals’ Benda delineates the true intellectuals in almost religious terms as not belonging to this world, safe from

any involvement in material advantages and practical aims and looking at scientific and metaphysical thought as the only worthy activities. In this Platonic interpretation, intellectuals, among whom the author locates philosophers such as Spinoza (1632 – 1677) and Voltaire (1694 – 1778), are independent individuals who set the standards of superior truths and who never compromise with political power. In this respect they can be considered as ‘a tiny band of super-gifted and morally endowed philosopher-Kings who constitute the conscience of mankind’ (Benda, 1980:43). However, despite the lack of attachment to practical goals and political diatribes, Benda’s intellectual is not an ‘ivory-towered individual [...] devoted to abstruse and obscure subjects’ but rather a man (Benda never mentions women as members of the category) driven by his metaphysical passion for truth and justice toward action, which involves defending the weakest in society, criticising established power and fighting unjust authority (Benda, 1980: 52). Only a very limited number of people can be included in the category of intellectuals since not many are ready to speak the truth in the face of power, being isolated and set apart in order to accomplish courageously the mission they are called to, which is in constant opposition to the status quo (Ibid.).

The definition of intellectuals outlined by Gramsci stands in direct opposition to the one formulated by Benda. The Sardinian philosopher’s idea of intellectual is much more entwined with the real world and the specific political situation of a particular historical time. The first difference with the previous definition consists in the fact that, according to Gramsci, all men are intellectuals, but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals (Gramsci, 1975: 1516). Following Gramsci, one has to recognise his/her own place in society and can contribute to its development in his/her role of intellectual only as an insider, an ‘organic’ part of a social group at a particular time, from which the expression ‘organic intellectual’ is derived (Gramsci, 1975). In this sense, Gramsci’s definition and his faith in the working class is

close to Brzozowski's idea of intellectuals (Brzozowski, 1910; Walicki, 1989: 176-98).

According to Montefiore, the common trait of the definitions considered until this point is that, in order to recognise someone as an intellectual, they all set as criteria two specific characteristics: the need to be autonomous and willing to act, where act stands for criticising (power), supporting (the victims of injustice), fighting (the status quo) and protecting (the values of justice and truth). In other words an intellectual is 'an incorrigibly independent soul answering to no one', 'anyone who takes a committed interest in the validity and truth of ideas for their own sake' (Montefiore, 1990: 201). As Mannheim puts it, individuals belonging to this category have to be 'free-floating', 'unanchored' and 'unattached' (Mannheim, 1993: 69-80). But if all intellectuals have to be independent and willing to act, they also are characterised by a self-awareness and a full understanding of their role within society as required by their duty to 'assimilate [the] point of view and conception of the whole' escaping from personal interests and material aims (Jacoby, 1987: 219-220). The intellectual has to be conscious of his/her place in society in order to become 'an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public', as well as an individual committed to raising embarrassing questions and to fighting against dogmas rather than producing them (Said, 1994: 8). His/her independence from the state comes from his/her duty to represent issues and people who are 'routinely forgotten' (Said, 1994: 9). S/he does so motivated by universal principles such as respect for human rights and love for freedom and justice but his/her action is always influenced by the person s/he is, his/her experiences and background as well as his/her personal sensibilities. Therefore, Said argues, there is not such a thing as a private intellectual, since writing and publishing are actions which gain immediately public relevance and have practical consequences (Ibid.).

Scholars tend to identify in the lack of one of the above mentioned fundamental characteristics of the intellectual the failure of their 'vocational mission' and therefore the start of a crisis which today is unanimously recognised as the dilemma of contemporary intellectuals. This can be expressed in the question formulated, among others, by Jennings and Kemp-Welch: 'Are we witnessing the disappearance of the intellectual?' (Jennings and Kemp-Welch, 1997: 12) or, to quote the title of Frank Furedi's recent work: 'Where have all the intellectuals gone?' (Furedi, 2004). But why are intellectuals considered as going through a crisis which questions their role in contemporary Western societies? In what sense can they be seen as failing to accomplish what Said calls their mission?

Nowadays there are new challenges that intellectuals have to face, primarily owing to the specialisation of their work, what Said calls 'professionalism', the dramatic cultural changes occurred within the academic world and the role played by the media. Gouldner (1979), following Gramsci's definition, argues that the old property class has been replaced by 'managers'. In this scenario intellectuals have lost their ability to talk to a broad public and are now trapped in a very specialised language which can only be understood by people working in the same field: 'they are experts addressing other experts in a sort of 'lingua franca' (Gouldner, 1979: 28-43). Foucault's claim that the traditional universal intellectual has had his place taken by a specialist who works in a specific discipline but is also able to use his expertise in other more general fields, stands in opposition to Furedi's perspective on the matter (Foucault, 1981; Said, 1994: 8). Indeed Furedi blames the transformation of the academic system for the phenomenon of specialisation, which he believes represents the end of the traditional intellectual class. According to him, this involves a growing relativism, mirrored by the modern methods of teaching which place different cultures on the same level, following a post-

modern attitude of refusing to recognise the existence of Truth (Furedi, 2004).

Following this deconstructive methodology, there are many truths and all of equal dignity, an approach which, according to Furedi, justifies the need to focus on very specialised subjects and is unable to provide a coherent general idea of the world. Rather, it is aimed at fragmenting any encompassing interpretations and at constructing and reproducing a myriad of microworlds that become the only horizon for each intellectual. In this sense the latter becomes the absolute expert in a specific field and can feel safe from the challenge of addressing anything different from his/her narrow field of knowledge (Furedi, 2004). The main consequence of this development is that 'what we have now is a missing generation which has been replaced by buttoned up, impossible to understand classroom technicians [...] anxious to please various patrons and agencies [...] not to promote debate but to establish reputations and intimidate non-experts' (Said, 1994: 54; Jacoby, 1987).

According to Jacoby (1987), since the 1940s to be intellectuals has meant to be professors, as intellectuals, lost in the universities, started to become interested in tenured employment and therefore governed by bureaucracy. As Jennings and Kemp-Welch put it, 'the result has been conformity and mediocrity'. What has thereby been destroyed is not just the 'incorrigibly independent soul answering to no one' but also 'a commitment not simply to a professional or private domain but to a public world' (Jennings and Kemp-Welch, 1997: 14).

Said agrees with these scholars in identifying specialisation as one of the failure of intellectuals, although he believes that they are exposed also to more dangerous risks, the first of which is what he calls 'professionalism'. With this term the author refers to 'thinking of your work as an intellectual as something you do for a living, between the hours of nine and five with one eye on the clock, and

another cocked at what is considered to be proper, professional behaviour [...] making yourself marketable and above all presentable, hence uncontroversial and unpolitical and “objective” (Said, 1994: 55). Following Said, the second risk that one runs as an intellectual is political correctness which forces humanists to think according to norms which ‘are supposed to be very sensitive to racism, sexism, and the like, instead of allowing people to debate in what is supposed to be an ‘open manner”’ (Said, 1994: 58).

Finally, the media play a central role in reinforcing this system, as mass media rely on personality and have the power to decide which voices have to be heard. Journalists and media magnates hold today the power to set as a new value ‘the ability to speak brilliantly on a subject about which one knows absolutely nothing’. In order to survive and be visible the intellectual has therefore to adapt to the situation and reason no longer in terms of independence but rather in terms of being part of a mechanism, which means having his/her own newspaper columns or appear as much as possible in TV programmes. (Jennings and Kemp-Welch, 1997: 14; Debray, 1981).

Since the early 1960s, Jurgen Habermas has written extensively on the role of intellectuals in the public sphere and on ‘visibility’ and ‘criticism’ as characteristics they need in order to shape the reaction of the public they address. Through the analysis of the media and their role in influencing public discussion on issues of general interest, the philosopher reflected on the globalisation and fragmentation of information and how they affected participation in the public sphere, and argued in favour of a new understanding of the role of intellectuals in opposition to the reiterated idea of the decline of such public characters. Habermas agrees on the challenges faced by contemporary intellectuals and particularly the revolution in communication strategies triggered by new media such as the Internet. However, albeit seemingly not anymore much different from ‘clever journalists’, intellectuals

maintain their role in a public sphere where horizontal communication allows a broader participation. They are still different from media stars and politicians as they are not interested in turning their 'influence' into power and are still characterised by 'the sense of what is lacking and could be otherwise', 'a spark of imagination in conceiving alternatives' and 'a modicum of the courage required for polarising, provoking, and pamphleteering' (Habermas, www.publicsphere.ssrc.org).

In general it could be said that with the term 'intellectuals' this thesis refers to individuals who, as a result of their work in a particular field, have gained a sort of recognised moral authority which comes both from their knowledge of certain issues and a capacity to apply that knowledge to a broader analysis of contemporary society. This is a moral authority usually untrammelled by economic and political power or at least not primarily arising from and justified by either. The common characteristic of these intellectuals is their potential ability to influence public opinion on certain themes they choose to debate and their awareness of their power to this effect. This does not mean that all of them intend or manage to reach a broad audience since, as this thesis will try to prove, often their opinions are out of touch with the majority of the public for reasons linked both to the style they adopt, which can be too specialised or obscure for an average audience, and to their attitude of keeping certain debates within a narrow circle of specialists. In this context, historians, sociologists, philosophers and journalists will be considered as intellectuals as far as they seem to have the authority to influence public opinion and the government on certain issues. In this sense it is possible to look at them more as opinion-makers than pure and hardly definable true intellectuals.

Having clarified what exactly this work refers to when addressing intellectuals, it is now possible to enter the question of to what extent and how Italian intellectuals are debating issues such as that

of national identity and the impact that immigration is going to have on the re-definition of this concept.

3. The revival of the discussion on Italianness

Italian intellectuals' awareness of a supposed crisis of the ideas of the nation and of national identity is a very recent phenomenon. According to Galli della Loggia, national identity has indeed been neglected by historians for decades, as can be proved for instance by an analysis of Federico Chabod's lectures held in Paris in 1950 on the theme of contemporary Italy (Chabod, 1961). In these lectures the crisis of the nation triggered by the war is never mentioned, probably, as Galli della Loggia argues, because the author looks at the question from the perspective of a supporter of the Resistance, which was the most common position during those years, and therefore chooses not to provide a conflicting interpretation of the civil war nature of this event (Galli della Loggia, 1996: 19-20). Chabod's attitude, polemically recalled by Galli della Loggia, was shared by the most prominent historians and intellectuals at that time. According to the scholar, they seemed to have removed the question of national identity from public debate and to have ignored it for almost fifty years despite the broadness and depth of a crisis of the idea of nation which led many to think 'di non essere più una nazione, o di non esserlo mai stati, o di non essere stati capaci di esserlo quando solo e per davvero contava', that is during the war (Galli della Loggia, 1996: 18).

The revival of the discussion on Italianness dates back to the early 1990s and is due to different concerns. A group of historians, journalists and sociologists, including Renzo De Felice, Ernesto Galli della Loggia, Norberto Bobbio, Gian Enrico Rusconi and Pietro Scoppola, started a debate on the influence of historical events and particularly of the Resistance on the dominant

understanding of Italian identity in the early 1990s. Other scholars, especially Giorgio Bocca, Ilvo Diamanti, Mauro Magatti and Roberto Cartocci, focused on the Northern League and how the political party led by Umberto Bossi might influence the shaping of a new feeling of national belonging in direct opposition to Italianness.

In order to explain the renewed interest in themes such as that of the Resistance and the rise to power of new political parties, it is necessary to locate this discussion in the wider context of Italian history and society at the time of the revival of concerns around the idea of national identity. According to Francesca Forno, 'Authors have spoken of the 1990s as the "revolutionary years", referring to the deep crisis that simultaneously involved the political parties, the political class, the institutions and the state' (Forno, 2003: 1). This crisis, investigated by scholars such as Ilvo Diamanti, Leonardo Morlino, Roberto Biorcio and Gianfranco Pasquino, involved a political, historical and social revolution caused by both external and internal factors. At an international level, the main events which contributed to shaking public opinion and reintroducing the until then neglected concepts of national belonging and nationalism were mainly represented by the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the war in Yugoslavia at the beginning of the decade and the advent of a united Europe under the increasing pressure of globalisation. As Silvana Patriarca states, 'The interest in national identity comes after a period – in fact almost the whole duration of the Cold War – when the language of national identity and nationalism in Italy were more or less the discursive monopoly of the extreme right. Scholarship ignored the issue, and popular culture developed other interests' (Patriarca, 2001: 21-22). Looking at popular music as a mirror of Italian society, Patriarca recalls, the most recurring theme in the 1990s becomes that of 'la mamma', which replaced that of 'patria' (Ibid.:22).

The end of the Cold War put an end to the long-standing opposition between Right and Left based on the perception of the political adversary as absolute evil and triggered changes in the two political actors which most influenced Italian identity since the end of World War II: Communism and Catholicism. The consequences on a national level of the fall of the Berlin wall included the necessity for the Italian Communist Party (PCI) to rethink its own identity, which led to a change of its name into PDS, Partito Democratico della Sinistra (Democratic Party of the Left) in 1991, a shift which saw the most extreme wing of the political movement reassert the communist legacy and join minor Left-wing movements such as Democrazia Proletaria (Proletarian Democracy) in order to form a new party: PRC, Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Refoundation Party) under the leadership of Fausto Bertinotti. The war in Yugoslavia contributed to increasing fears for a possible dissolution of the Italian nation-state and to developing a general revival among intellectuals of the idea of *patria* also linked to the myth of the partisan war. Looking at the collapse of its neighbouring country, Italy started developing a new rhetoric of nationalism, while ‘most Italian intellectuals took the side of the nation-state and rediscovered the value of a “good” patriotism’ (Patriarca, 2001: 23). Finally, the increasing globalization and the advent of a united Europe contributed ‘to the urgency of reflecting on the consequences of the waning of national sovereignty as it has been known so far’ (Ibid: 21).

Some intellectuals and scholars, such as Giorgio Bocca and Saverio Vertone, believed that Europe represented the only chance Italy had to overcome its problems and particularly the antagonism between the North and the South of the country and that only a European citizenship could succeed in what the national state had failed: providing citizens with a common and shared sense of belonging (Bocca, 1990, Vertone, 1994). Others have argued that Italy’s weak sense of national identity might represent an advantage in order to integrate into a super-national and more

inclusive belonging, suggesting the idea that Italy's history and traditions which contributed to turning the country into a natural 'crogiolo' (crucible) of cultures will give it a central role in Europe (Melotti, 2004).

After having briefly mentioned the different external factors which influenced the revival of the debate on national identity, it is also necessary to focus on the internal phenomena that have influenced the discussion in the past two decades. The first and main factor is represented by the scandal of 'mani pulite', literally 'clean hands', a police investigation into political corruption held in the 1990s, following the scandal of the collapse of Banco Ambrosiano in 1982. The scandal implicated the mafia, the Vatican Bank IOR and the Masonic lodge P2 and led to the demise of the so-called First Republic, resulting in the disappearance of many parties and a paralysis of the political system. The feeling of loss and confusion derived from the collapse of the traditional political parties and their related subcultures will be dealt with later in this chapter. Looking at the political consequences of such a downfall, the emergence of new political actors which followed can be seen as a reaction to a situation of widespread instability and uncertainty. This particular political conjuncture was exploited by new parties such as Umberto Bossi's Northern League and Silvio Berlusconi's 'Forza Italia', to break into the national political scene.

It is not easy to date precisely the start of the revival of the debate. Italian intellectuals themselves seem to have slightly divergent opinions on when the theme of national identity was rediscovered after a long period of time during which it had been neglected or undervalued. According to Cartocci, the beginning of the 1990s represents the starting point of a new interest in the subject. Indeed, as he states, 'Una lunga stagione di rimozioni, di inadempienze e di imprevidenze è definitivamente tramontata con la fine degli anni 80' (Cartocci, 1994: 9). He dates the first

intervention in the debate back to the contributions made by Gian Enrico Rusconi, Pietro Scoppola and Angelo Panebianco to the academic journal *Il Mulino* in 1991. Cartocci believes the reflection on Italian national belonging has to start from their three articles entitled respectively: ‘Se l’identità italiana non è più motivo di solidarismo’, ‘Una incerta cittadinanza italiana’, and ‘Representation without Taxation’ (Cartocci, 1994). Rusconi, on the contrary, argues that the national question already became more acute in public debates in every European country during the 1980s and that this phenomenon was due to the rise of regionalist movements as well as other factors which vary from country to country. In France, for instance, according to Rusconi, Le Pen managed to utilise various issues linked to immigration in order to promote what he called ‘la priorità della scelta nazionale’ (Rusconi, 1993: 9). In Germany the theme of immigration promoted a discussion on German identity, which led to xenophobic behaviour ideologically supported by nationalism. As Rusconi underlines, the main factor which determined the revival of the discussion on national identities was the difficulty of building a politically united Europe (Rusconi, 1993).

In Italy, too, during the first half of the 1980s there seemed to be increased interest in the theme of national identity, marked by the publication of a few books on the subject written by intellectuals such as academic Giulio Bollati (1983), writer and journalist Marcello Veneziani (1983) and Einaudi publisher Silvio Lanaro (1988). Nevertheless, as Rusconi recalls, these publications did not contribute to opening up a positive and productive debate on the issue but rather had their limit in the fact that they only remarked upon the difficulties of approaching the matter (Rusconi, 1993). This debate was shortlived: ‘tutto però è finito [...] tra la fine degli anni ottanta e i primi novanta’ (Rusconi, 1993: 10). This premature end of the discussion was due, according to Rusconi, to the economic slump and the financial scandals of those years, as indeed that of ‘mani pulite’. Under those circumstances, the so-

called 'nationalism made in Italy', as Rusconi defined the nationalist pride felt at the time, which had been facilitated by a positive political and cultural conjuncture under the first socialist government, had very few chances to survive (Ibid.). According to sociologist Melotti (2004), the current Italian political and ideological discourse on the impact of immigration on Italian identity started instead in the early 1980s when some intellectuals engaged in the debate on immigration. Melotti is referring to sociologist and politician Laura Balbo, member of the PCI (Italian Communist Party) and later of 'Sinistra Indipendente' and former 'ministro delle pari opportunità' and sociologist Luigi Manconi, also politically active within the Left and close to the Catholic association Azione Cattolica, of which he is a prominent representative. Balbo and Manconi, co-founders of the association 'Italia-razzismo', were among the first to open a discussion on immigration, suggesting as a solution to the - at that time new phenomenon - an alternative model of society based on what they defined as 'social integration', which involved the protection of the cultural identity of immigrants (Balbo and Manconi, 1990; Melotti, 2004: 162).

Despite the diversity of opinions concerning the timing of the new debate on national identity in Italy, intellectuals and academics tend to agree that the neglect of the concept of nationality and a general feeling of detachment from the idea of national belonging lasted from the Second World war until the 1980s, although different scholars attribute greater or lesser importance to the different factors which determined these attitudes.

'Noi che vi siamo nati, preferiamo da tempo non parlarne più. Un'ostinata volontà di rimuovere, e poi troppa cattiva retorica, seguita da un eccesso del suo contrario – abitudini coltivate con eguale talento – hanno creato una specie di blocco mentale: quasi una lesione permanente nella rappresentazione di noi stessi' (Schiavone, 1998: 3). With these words Schiavone opens his work

Italiani senza Italia and describes the feeling of impotence and detachment from the idea of national belonging experienced by Italian citizens. He pictures them as a people who share a deep sense of mistrust and dissatisfaction, which determines a lack of enthusiasm and perspectives for the future (Schiavone, 1998). This feeling of detachment and alienation from national belonging can be explained with, and at the same time can be a symptom of, the phenomenon that Galli della Loggia calls 'morte della patria' (Galli della Loggia, 1996). What does 'morte della patria' mean? What can justify the death of the homeland? Or, in other words, how can the *patria* die? As Rusconi states in 'Se cessiamo di essere una nazione', 'Una nazione può cessare d'esserlo' (Rusconi, 1993: 7). For him, a nation is not a fixed and indestructible structure, but rather a fragile social construction made up of shared culture and myths, based on open consensus and reciprocity between citizens. These ties of citizenship, which have to be supported by loyalty and shared experiences and views, represent the institutional structure of 'a nation of citizens' (Ibid.). The death of the homeland, as Satta wrote in *De Profundis* and Galli della Loggia recalls in his *La morte della patria*, is doubtless the most important event that can occur in the life of individuals (Satta, 1948: 16; Galli della Loggia, 1996: 3). This is, in their view, what happened to Italy after World War II. A deep feeling of death of the homeland is what anyone who had preserved an idea of the existence of an Italian nation experienced at that time. But what did determine this 'death of the homeland' and the subsequent disregard of the feeling of national belonging on the part of both intellectuals and ordinary people?

4. Military defeat and the Resistance: the end of a shared memory

Historians Aldo Schiavone, Ernesto Galli della Loggia, Renzo De Felice and Pietro Scoppola, philosopher Norberto Bobbio and political scientist Gian Enrico Rusconi agree, despite their different points of view, on the need to analyse the historical events in which Italy has been involved since World War II in order to understand how the sense of national belonging had developed or rather had been inhibited in the past and how this past still contributes to shaping Italian identity. The discussion on the different interpretations of the Resistance, in particular, nowadays represents a point of reference that cannot be disregarded since it constitutes the main focus of intellectuals' speculations. The theme is indeed still very strongly debated and many of the issues which are currently discussed in Italy are linked more or less directly to the question of national identity as it has been shaped by the different approaches to the Resistance.

The debate on the Resistance and consequently that on Italianness followed three main strands of thoughts: intellectuals close to the Right focus on the negative aspects of this historical event that, in their view, was a civil war which damaged the sense of national belonging rather than providing the nation with a shared narrative of a common history. These scholars include Galli della Loggia, a historian close to the Left at the beginning of his career, who moved towards the right of the political spectrum becoming very critical of Communism and its legacy. Mussolini's biographer Renzo De Felice (1929-1996), a former student of Federico Chabod, also contributed to the discussion on the Resistance and his views were met by heated reactions on the part of scholars who accused him of analysing the dictatorship from the perspective of a supporter. The main opponent of De Felice's positions was Norberto Bobbio (1909-2004), a philosopher, historian and political scientist whose role as an intellectual has been

acknowledged nationally and internationally. Bobbio, a member of the Partito d'Azione and traditionally close to anti-fascist movements, is among those who gave an interpretation of the Resistance diametrically opposed to that put forward by De Felice. Bobbio, indeed, believed that the struggle against Mussolini represented a central moment in the creation of a national identity. The two scholars also engaged in a dialogue on the theme, that later became a book, as this chapter will explain. Finally, the third strand of thought according to which national identity has been discussed has, among its proponents, scholars and intellectuals whose contribution cannot be framed within the two previous categories: among them are Pietro Scoppola and Gian Enrico Rusconi. The approach of the two scholars towards the debate is characterised by less polemical intents: in the case of the latter this is probably justified by the need to look at the issue from an academic and scientific perspective. Scoppola (1926-2007), an academic and politician elected to parliament in 1983 in the list of the Democrazia Cristiana, the Italian Christian democratic party, seemed more interested in finding a compromise between the two opposing interpretations of the events linked to the dictatorship and to the war, as will emerge from the following analysis.

All the intellectuals mentioned above contributed to the revival of the discussion on national identity in the early 1990s, publishing in national newspapers close to both the Left and the Right as well as in more academic journals such as *Il Mulino* and *Limes*. They can be considered as intellectuals for their participation in a public debate which they contributed to creating and shaping, also by echoing the position of other academics less visible in the public sphere, whose voices were confined to academic exchanges.

According to Galli della Loggia (1996), it is necessary to go back to the political and military crisis that Italy faced during the war and which led to the defeat of the state to find a plausible explanation for the Italians' feelings of inadequacy and inferiority

which determined the progressive failure of a shared sense of national belonging. It is this period of Italian history these scholars look at in order to provide a reason for the so-called ‘disfattismo italiano’, which represents an historical explanation for what they consider as the main Italian characteristics and behaviour such as a widespread mistrust towards the state and a tendency to react to any critical situation with passive resignation (Galli della Loggia, 1996: 8).

As this chapter will show later on, defeatism represents a key-element in explaining the progressive decline of a shared sense of national belonging. This decline is caused by many interconnected factors such as the attachment to the family rather than to the community/nation as well as the power of the Catholic Church, which has always been stronger in the South of the country where ‘disfattismo’ is also deeply-rooted. The Italians’ tendency to give priority to the local dimension and particularly to the family rather than to the more general institution of the nation recently emerged in a series of surveys commissioned by the journal of geopolitical affairs *Limes* in preparation for a special issue on Italian identity planned for the 150th anniversary of Unification. The first, published in *La Repubblica* on 3 March 2009, shows that when asked what values are characteristic of Italianness 34.7 per cent of Italian citizens chose the answer ‘attaccamento alla famiglia’ and 18.6 per cent said ‘la tradizione cattolica’, while only 6.4 per cent identified Italian identity with ‘attaccamento alla democrazia’ and 4.7 per cent with ‘senso civico, fiducia nello stato’, 2.2 per cent responded that ‘gli italiani non sono un popolo; i popoli sono i veneti, i siciliani, etc.’ (www.uaar.it/news; www.temi.repubblica.it/limes). These data were confirmed by a following survey conducted by Demos in November 2009, according to which 51 per cent of interviewees claimed they did not feel any pride in their national identity, while 25 per cent responded that they were ashamed of being Italian (Diamanti, 2010).

Going back to the Resistance and its conflicting interpretations, scholars are still involved in exacerbated polemics as to the date on which the homeland died. Different dates, indeed, involve a different explanation of why the concept of homeland came to an end. Intellectuals involved in the discussion agree on the impossibility for Italians of having as a point of reference shared memories and a common perception of their past (Rusconi, 1991; 1993; Galli della Loggia, 1996; Bobbio et al., 1996). Nevertheless, the fact that they attribute this outcome to different factors is representative of their deeply divergent points of view on the reasons why Italians cannot share an unambiguous past.

Galli della Loggia thinks that the homeland died at the beginning of the war, when, as he explains through the words of writer Corrado Alvaro, ‘Gran parte d’Italia si augurò dal primo giorno della guerra la disfatta. [...] La solidarietà e il patriottismo e il senso della responsabilità individuale, andavano disperse e uccise’ (Alvaro, 1986: 34-36; Galli della Loggia, 1996: 7-8). He believes that the crisis of the state and its institutions resulted from the military defeat during the war and cannot be directly ascribed to Fascism. What happened in those years was that the political and ethical weakness and inadequacy of the state became suddenly evident and led to an unstoppable loss of the cohesion of the nation. The defeat raised questions about the value of a homeland which was not ready to fight and morally not strong enough to shake off its passivity until the end. As Galli della Loggia argues, ever since Machiavelli the lack of experience and worth of the Italian army has been the main reasons for the lack of development in the country of a strong national state (Galli della Loggia, 1996). He quotes Giacomo Leopardi too, who in his *Discorso sopra lo stato presente dei costumi degli italiani* (1824) argued that a military defeat always triggers a moral crisis which puts into questions values of pride and freedom and therefore determines a downfall in self-esteem and faith in the homeland (Leopardi, ed.1991: 129; Galli della Loggia, 1996: 88). According to Galli della Loggia and

even more so according to De Felice, this is why the 8th of September should be considered the day on which the homeland died (Galli della Loggia, 1996; De Felice in Bobbio et al., 1996). ‘Non parto dal 25 Aprile, ma dall’8 Settembre, il giorno in cui Eisenhower annunciò l’armistizio con gli italiani. Data tragica della nazione italiana: quel giorno è l’idea di patria che muore’ (Bobbio et al., 1996: 16). With these words De Felice refers to the feelings of frustration and weariness as well as to the desire for peace on the part of a country where most of the people had believed in the ‘fascist’ war (Ibid.). Galli della Loggia and De Felice, nonetheless, disagree on the importance of that day, in the sense that, according to Galli della Loggia, it determined a collapse in national pride and therefore the death of the nation whereas De Felice thinks that it only contributed to highlighting a moral and ethical crisis which most Italians and the nation as a whole had already experienced for years (Galli della Loggia, 1996; De Felice in Bobbio et al., 1996).

As Pavone states, ‘ancora oggi considerare l’8 Settembre come una mera tragedia o come l’inizio di un processo di liberazione è una linea che distingue le interpretazioni di opposte sponde’ (Pavone, 1991: 36; Galli della Loggia, 1996: 24). Both Galli della Loggia and De Felice belong to a strand of revisionist historians who think that the 8th of September represented a tragedy for the country. De Felice’s work, as well as Galli della Loggia’s, aims to show that the Resistance was nothing more than an elitist movement lead by small and unorganised groups of people who were perceived by the rest of Italians as ‘pazzi’, fools who wanted to start fighting again when the war was just over (De Felice in Bobbio et al., 1996: 16). De Felice, in particular, argues that the majority of Italians distanced themselves from the partisan movement after the armistice with the Allies, and aims to demonstrate the existence of a widespread disapproval of it. Other intellectuals refer to attitudes of indifference, rather than hostility, towards the Resistance.

The portrait of the Resistance as a civil war is another contentious issue. First put forward by the leftist historian Claudio Pavone (1991), this interpretation is supported by Galli della Loggia and to a certain extent by Rusconi as well. Galli della Loggia claims that it was even worse than a 'normal' civil war since in that situation there is usually a national winner whereas in Italy the only winners were foreigners. According to him, the war between fascism and the Resistance movement, which was ultimately won by the Allies, did not involve the majority of the population who remained in a so-called grey zone of inactivity and resignation and who suffered fascism, the war and the Resistance as they would have suffered an earthquake (Galli della Loggia, 1996: 87; Rusconi, 1993).

A completely different interpretation of the Resistance is provided by left-leaning philosopher Bobbio, who considers the 25th of April 1945, the day of the liberation, as 'una data fondamentale non solo per l'Italia ma per l'umanità' (Bobbio, 1996: 19). As it emerges clearly from the exchange between him and De Felice, which in 1996 became a book entitled *Italiani, amici nemici* and which also includes a contribution by Rusconi, both intellectuals agree that a lack of shared memory is what makes Italy an anomalous country (Bobbio et al., 1996). Nevertheless, Bobbio is of the opinion that, as in other European countries such as France or Denmark, the importance of celebrating the liberation should be seen as unproblematic and should not have been questioned in Italy (Bobbio et al., 1996: 16). Bobbio recalls that the elitist nature of the Italian Risorgimento did not prevent it from being celebrated for a century: in the same way the fact that the Resistance had been carried out by a minority of citizens does not make it a less important landmark in the history of the country (Ibid.).

The philosopher singles out the 10th of June, the first day of war for Italy, as opposed to the 8th of September, as a tragic date for the nation which determined the death of a shared feeling of national

identity. If De Felice argues that the homeland died the day the armistice was announced and that Italians had wavering opinions on the war depending on which battles were lost or won, Bobbio claims that ‘Noi, una minoranza, eravamo pienamente convinti che l’Italia dovesse perdere ma gli Italiani nel loro complesso non erano certamente favorevoli all’entrata in guerra’. Moreover, ‘Eccetto per qualche fascista non c’è stato nessun consenso popolare per la guerra’ (Bobbio, 1996: 19). The different views in establishing to what extent the Italians took part in the Resistance or opposed it, these opposing interpretations of historical events, have determined the perceived difficulty for Italy to become a ‘normal’ country, with a normal political right and political left, which is what both intellectuals claim to wish for future generations (Bobbio et al., 1996). The achievement of this ‘dream’ of a normal Italy, according to these scholars, depends on the ability and the will of historians to consider all the nuances and differences within such a complex event as the Resistance and the necessity of avoiding univocal interpretations of this phenomenon. According to De Felice, indeed, ‘il nocciolo della questione sta tutto qui: come mai l’Italia non è riuscita a fondare una nuova coscienza nazionale, invece che su verità di comodo e su dogmi ideologici, su quello che gli italiani nel bene e nel male sono stati?’ (De Felice, 1996).

Nevertheless, as Rusconi argued, despite the fact that Bobbio and De Felice agree on the need to look at the Resistance from a more neutral perspective, the dialogue between them turned out to be ‘piuttosto deludente [...] A meno di non prendere proprio questo risultato e le difficoltà di comunicazione tra i due studiosi come il dato interessante su cui riflettere e da cui prendere avvio’ (Rusconi, 1996: 71). Even though they both find it necessary to take into account all the many different interpretations of that historical period, they do not move from their original positions. Bobbio indeed, writing about revisionism, sarcastically stated: ‘mi sto rafforzando nella convinzione che – nel giudizio su fascismo e

antifascismo – se parli male del fascismo sei un moralista, se parli male dell'antifascismo sei, invece, un bravo storico, anzi uno storico “normale” (Bobbio, 1996).

On the other hand, the so-called revisionists and some journalists close to the right insisted that the impossibility of a shared memory based on an unambiguous interpretation of the Resistance was due to the left's attempt to claim a monopoly on the concept of Italianness. Indeed, according to Galli della Loggia, this was nothing different from what fascism had already attempted to do: ‘Questo aveva reclamato per sé [...] il privilegio di rappresentare l'idea di nazione [...] la patria fascista era obbligatoriamente la patria dei veri italiani. [...] L'antifascismo credette di non avere altra scelta che imitare il suo avversario, soltanto reclamando per sé il privilegio’ (Galli della Loggia, 1996: 32). As a result, such a dichotomy in Italian history, which involved the coexistence of two separate and irreconcilable nations, was totally incompatible with the idea of a unitary feeling of national belonging. Moreover, the most unexpected result of this ‘contradiction’, as Galli della Loggia defines it, was that antifascism claimed after the war the right to represent the country as a whole ‘sostenendo che l'antifascismo era tout court l'Italia, e l'Italia era l'antifascismo’ (Galli della Loggia, 1996: 36). In the author's perspective, the development of a divided nation and of a dual idea of national identity could not have been prevented or avoided in the past nor could the conflict be solved now (in the 1990s), despite many intellectuals such as Scoppola believing this to be necessary in the national interest (Scoppola, 1995). According to him, indeed, this result was implicit in the nature of the Italian Resistance: to really overcome fascism and develop a new national awareness the Resistance should have been a stronger movement, whereas Italian partisans did not achieve any real victory against fascism, something which was instead achieved by the Allies (Galli della Loggia, 1996). Galli della Loggia believes that, among several reasons which prevented the Resistance from embodying national mythology, a major role was played by internal

contrasts between its different groups on decisive political aspects and its lack of a nationalist ideology. The kind of national identity that emerged after the war was hence not an inclusive identity nor the result of a national struggle for liberation, but rather an elitist belonging linked to a political and moral judgment of what had been right or wrong during those years. In this context, as Rusconi, together with many others, recalls, a majority of people were 'attendisti' and passively waited for the end of the war without taking a clear position on it (Rusconi, 1993: 63).

As mentioned above, some intellectuals, such as Rusconi and Scoppola, seek to overcome all the perceived obstacles in constructing a national identity out of an ambiguous and contested meaning of the Resistance, by arguing that those difficulties are part of the past and that, despite them, today it is possible to attribute to the legacy of the Resistance that national and political value it should have had at that time. The Resistance could still provide Italians with a shared memory and a strong and common feeling of national identity (Galli della Loggia, 1996: 86; Scoppola, 1995: 52-54). However, Rusconi does not agree with the contents of the common narrative suggested by Scoppola. According to the scholar, Scoppola's justification following which all Italians, even though fighting on different fronts or simply waiting for the end of the war, suffered the same events and shared the same 'volontà di resistere e vivere' seems to privilege a sociological analysis over a historical investigation and to be too generous in equating 'legittime strategie di sopravvivenza della popolazione' with an active struggle for freedom (Rusconi, 1996: 81-82). This positive judgement, Rusconi claims, is attributed too easily by scholars such as Scoppola, to the behaviour of the Catholic hierarchy, which was actually ambiguous in its stance or merely aimed at its own survival (Ibid). Scoppola's point of view is entwined with a Catholic ethics according to which 'le disgrazie renderebbero gli uomini migliori' (Scoppola, 1995; Galli della Loggia, 1996: 89). Galli della Loggia agrees with Rusconi and underlines that,

actually, the common experience suffered as individuals of losing a war and having the country occupied by foreigners does not necessarily involve any particular moral harmony and shared understanding (Galli della Loggia, 1996). Nonetheless, Rusconi also polemises with Galli della Loggia and his rejection of the value and the inheritance of the Resistance due to its internal contradiction and lack of nationalistic ideology. He believes that it is indeed possible to find a common past in those events but only in the solidarity which characterized Italians at that time, rather than the fact that regardless of the side they took, all of them went through the same difficult times (Rusconi in Bobbio et al., 1996).

5. The ambiguity of political parties after the war

Scoppola's attempt to reconcile divergent experiences and different attitudes to the Resistance into a shared Italian identity does not take into account the fact that the Resistance was not the only factor which contributed to creating what many intellectuals consider an unbridgeable rift between contrasting interpretations of the meaning of Italianness. Among the other historical events which, according to some intellectuals, determined the impossibility of constructing a shared feeling of national belonging after the war is the manner in which the Italian Communist Party (PCI) dealt with the cession of Venezia Giulia to Tito's Yugoslavia. In his *La morte della patria*, Galli della Loggia, having explained the Resistance movement's aim to claim for itself the right to represent the whole country, focuses on the role that the PCI had in this controversial issue and on its attempt to build a nation by trying to alienate a part of it. The author reacts to those intellectuals who advocate the need for a lowest common denominator which can heal the wound of a divided memory and provide Italians with a powerful and convincing narrative of shared history and national belonging, by underlining the many factors that contributed to the division, among them the fact that the PCI

did not oppose but rather facilitated Tito's claims on Istria and the region of Venezia Giulia, the city of Trieste included (Galli della Loggia, 1996). He finds the reasons for such an attitude in the myth of Yugoslavian partisan war and in the attraction the PCI felt towards a country on which Stalin's influence was great, as well as in its own internationalist ideology and rejection of nationalism as a concept linked to fascism. This section of this chapter does not intend to investigate in any detail the matter of the relationship between the PCI and Yugoslavia, as this has been investigated by many scholars and more recently by Roberto Gualtieri (2006). It rather aims to underline the central role which the Italian Communist Party played, in the eyes of many intellectuals, in the fragmentation of Italian identity after World War II. In taking position on matters of international interest the party always stood on the side of the foreigners, as long as they had a communist tradition, and often promoted solutions which were deeply 'anti-Italian' and against the Italian interest (Galli della Loggia, 1996: 61). The fact that the PCI decided to stand for Yugoslavia in the dispute about the Venezia Giulia clearly created a tension between the party and the local non-communist resistance movements.

Moreover, the fact that the PCI usually supported other countries, such as the Soviet Union, more than Italy because ideologically dependent on them, contributed to developing a sense of inferiority and subalternity, which seems to remain a trait of the Italian character. This attitude, this ideological and moral dependence on foreign countries, contributed to developing among Italians a deep feeling of 'transformism' and servility (Galli della Loggia, 1996). This situation weakened the already weak sense of national pride as well as that of national will and determined the spread of a general attitude of indifference and resignation, particularly in the South of the country, where people lost all sense of dignity and abandoned themselves to a general anarchy and servility. Writing in 1945, Guglielmo Giannini (founder of the 'Movimento dell'Uomo Qualunque') tried to foresee the consequences that the

renunciation, for instance of Veneto, would have had and how it could have affected the 'Folla' (masses). His answer to the question 'Cosa accadrebbe per la folla?' is 'Nulla', this meaning that they would have been indifferent. Therefore he can conclude that if there is something mortal in this world, that is the idea of homeland (Giannini, ed.2002: 12; Galli della Loggia, 1996: 112).

According to authors such as Schiavone and Galli, the end of strong political ideologies was a further cause for people's detachment from a shared sense of national identity (Schiavone, 1998). Until then, indeed, political parties had provided Italians with a strong sense of belonging, and despite the fact that this belonging was based on the mutual exclusion and alienation of opposing interpretations of Italianness, it was not questioned by its members who tended to consider that belonging as the only possible national identity. Schiavone, rather than focusing on the fact that political parties created antagonistic perceptions and experiences of the same country, prefers to argue that the Italian Republic was based on highly influential political parties, which in turn represented a condition and not a consequence for the formation of the nation-state. Therefore, as soon as the crisis of political parties broke out, especially in the early 1990s with the involvement of the Judiciary and the end of the DC's supremacy, its most immediate consequence was widespread feelings of bewilderment among the citizens, and of a loss of identification with specific political and ideological subcultures, namely the Catholic and Communist ones. Schiavone seems to believe that a common identity based on political belonging, even though involving the exclusion and the denial of a considerable part of the country which embraces an opposing membership, was nevertheless a valid means to participation in an Italian identity (Schiavone, 1998).

This overview of intellectual interventions on the contribution of historical factors to shaping a sense of national belonging becomes

of interest in the context of a wider analysis of national identity and immigration as it explains what issues have been discussed in order to investigate the ‘construction’ (or deconstruction) of Italianness. Understanding the importance of the debate on the Resistance and the role of the Italian army during the war from this perspective allows us to infer that Italian intellectuals have identified in these historical events the main factors which account for a (weak) feeling of national belonging. Immigration does not feature among the ‘challenges’ calling for a re-definition of such a belonging, presumably for two reasons. Firstly, because at the time when the revival of the debate on identity started, immigration had not begun to matter in the public sphere and was still perceived by the state and by public opinion as temporary and manageable, as Chapter IV will explain in more detail. Secondly, because the discussion on national pride is today still much linked to the dichotomy between the Right and the Left and has been used to de-legitimize political opponents, as an analysis of the terms ‘communist’ and ‘fascist’ used in political debates as derogatory appellatives would show. What matters here is that Italian intellectuals have been taking part in a public debate on issues linked to identity and therefore it can be said that the gap in the discussion on immigration in relation to national identity has to be attributed to a lack of interest on the part of intellectuals rather than in a general lack of power or participation on their part in the public sphere.

6. The influence of political factors on the Italian debate on national identity

Among the several political factors which contributed to the revival of the discussion on Italian national identity, the rise of the Northern League doubtlessly represents the most influential one. During the 1990s, sociologists, political scientists and journalists, such as Ilvo Diamanti, Roberto Biorcio, Renato Mannheimer, Mauro Magatti and Roberto Cartocci, urged by spreading concerns about the rise to power of this new political actor, started a debate on the theme with the intent of outlining the reasons, the geography and the consequences of the electoral success of this party founded in 1991 as a result of the coalition of different autonomist movements. This chapter does not have as its focus a detailed analysis of the origin of the Northern League or an exhaustive account of the party's position on national identity and immigration. It rather aims to provide a brief overview of the influence this party has had through its ideology upon the idea of Italian national belonging and how its appearance on the political arena has opened a debate on alternative identities. A more in depth analysis of its role in shaping a much more exclusionary understanding of 'national identity' and citizenship at the time when immigration started to gather pace will be carried out in Chapter III.

The Northern League seemed to outline a completely novel definition of Italian identity, whereas the post-war parties tended to support traditional even though 'partial' interpretations of national belonging. This section will attempt to argue that Italian intellectuals identify a close connection between the crisis of the feeling of attachment to the nation discussed above and the success of the alternative construction of national community developed and popularised by the Northern League. As a result, they adopted inward-looking perspectives which involved, once again, revisiting historical events and 'failures' considered as crucial fault-lines. In

this way, intellectuals failed to counteract the exclusionary identity constructed by the Northern League with an inclusionary redefinition of what constitutes 'Italianness' by fully taking into account the implication of the immigration phenomenon.

Intellectuals' analyses of the factors which led to the electoral success of the Northern League in 1992 started from a shared acknowledgement of the deep crisis Italy had experienced since the 1980s. This crisis, among other things, triggered a questioning of the legitimacy and the efficiency of the institutions and of a renewed polarisation between the North and the South of the country: 'Si è così cominciato a interrogarsi con maggiore sistematicità rispetto al passato sulle insufficienze della nostra cultura democratica, sulle origini di queste debolezze e persino sul senso della nostra identità nazionale' (Cartocci, 1994: 9). Cartocci then develops an investigation into the lack of identification with the state and the nation which aims to show that the cultural crisis acknowledged by most scholars has its roots in the history of the country (Cartocci, 1994).

According to other scholars, the increasing number of autonomist movements, affecting not only Italy but many other countries such as Scotland, Belgium, the ex-Yugoslavia, Spain and Canada, represents a general trend of the 1990s. This has resulted from social tensions which all around the world have triggered a debate on 'the ethnic question' after years in which historical nationalisms had provided many countries with strong homogeneous collective identities (Melucci and Diani, 1992; Magatti, 1998). According to Magatti, traditional belongings based on ethnic 'archaic' identities can be rediscovered today in developed countries for two different reasons. On the one hand, this tendency can be motivated by the fact that, when the values and the institutions of a civic national culture begin to be questioned for different reasons, not least globalisation, national solidarity finds an antagonist in primordial groups based on blood ties or on an unconditioned adhesion to

values, which weaken the loyalty toward the nation-state (Magatti, 1998: 16). On the other hand, this 'ethnic revival' can be justified as a mechanism, typical of modern societies, which aims to recreate a new sense of collective identity and a feeling of common belonging rather than to rediscover traditional cultural points of reference. It answers people's need to feel part of a whole and to create a relatively safe environment which can contribute to controlling the growing anxiety caused by globalization and global integration (Ibid.): 'In questa visione non contano tanto gli elementi oggettivi e l'essere o no membro di un gruppo etnico diventa in ultima istanza un'opzione volontaria' (Magatti, 1998: 17). Magatti, recalling Gellner, argues that the ethnic revival does not necessarily involve a new awareness of one's own identity: often it rather invents identities where they do not exist. The so-called 'imagined communities' become real following a process of social construction (Magatti, 1998: 17). Despite differing interpretations of the ethnic revival, the two theories described above concur that the emergence of a feeling of belonging in order to build a new ethnic identity is a social, cultural and political process (Ibid.). Beside a process of re-invention of 'old' identities, the ethnic revival also created a considerable number of completely new ones (Rusconi, 1993; Magatti, 1998). These new identities become the vehicle of social conflict: ethnic identity then turns into a means for political mobilisation which polemically emphasizes differentiation, contraposition, antagonism and discrimination (Magatti, 1998: 21; Bell, 1993). The self-attribution of an ethnic identity turns out to be 'una risorsa strategica per ottenere qualcosa o per negare qualcosa a qualcun altro' (Magatti, 1998: 20).

The rise of the Northern League, therefore, led various intellectuals to revisit the issue of a weak national identity in terms of the internal divide between North and South, which required in their view a new emphasis upon a common past and shared narratives. They became concerned with identifying the actors who should develop and tell the country a convincing story of a

common past. Rusconi admits that it is not easy to say who should have the responsibility to tell ‘una storia di comunanza fatta non solo di letteratura, di armi e di sangue, ma di lavoro e fatiche comuni, di migrazione e rimescolamenti interni da cui si sono prodotti legami che non possono essere spezzati senza ferire l’identità storica di tutti gli italiani del nord come del sud’ (Rusconi, 1993: 14). According to the scholar, it is not possible, in Italy as elsewhere, to achieve a civic feeling of belonging without rebuilding ‘a shared memory, at the same time critical and united’ (Ibid.). Rusconi also questions how far back in national history it is necessary to go in order to tell this story and decides it has to start from Fascism and the Resistance, which is an opinion shared by many other scholars, as has already been discussed.

7. The role of political sub-cultures in the Northern League’s rise to power

The intellectuals’ search for the underlying causes of the rise and success of a secessionist party such as the Northern League led them to focus on the role of political subcultures in promoting and codifying internal barriers to shared values and a common identity.

The concept of ‘political subculture’ indicates the power and antagonism against the liberal state of socialist and Catholic movements (Pizzorno, 1966; Sivini, 1971). The so-called red and white subcultures are characterised by their influence on electoral behaviour, in the case of Italy since the second half of the XX century. Traditionally defined in relation to their geographical distribution (Caciagli, 1998), political subcultures express the complex elements of a local political system and the relation between this political system, culture and economic development (Trigilia, 1981): ‘Culture is not only opinion and attitudes, but ideas and values, symbols and norms, myths and rites, real and repeated and, finally, structures and institutions operating in a

geographical environment and in a historical context' (Caciagli, 1998). While scholars such as Messina (2001) view the red and white subcultures as actors putting forward different and opposing interpretations of politics, others such as Trigilia see them as variants of the same model (Trigilia, 1981). The crisis of the Italian political system in the early 1990s was mirrored if not anticipated by a decline of both political subcultures due to globalisation and industrial expansion as well as the downfall of the Communist and Christian democratic parties, which marked the end of the narratives and myths that had made possible an identification with one of the subcultures and its territory (Caciagli, 1995). The weakening of traditional subcultures left space for the emerging of new territorial identities put forward by the so-called 'leagues', the autonomous movements which in the late 1980s merged into the Northern League (Ibid.).

The scholars involved in the debate on the Northern League, such as Roberto Cartocci, Mauro Magatti and especially Roberto Biorcio and Ilvo Diamanti have investigated the reasons why the party's presence is concentrated in specific areas of northern Italy (Cartocci, 1994; Magatti, 1998; Biorcio, 1997; Diamanti, 1996). In this view, historical political parties, such as the PCI, the Italian Communist Party, and the DC, the Christian Democratic Party, played a central role in supplying citizens with a sense of identification: they indeed always worked as narrators of those tales which have been defined as fundamental for the formation of a national identity based on common views and shared memories (Rusconi, 1991). They provided citizens with a strong sense of belonging based on well defined ideologies and symbols, which facilitated a complete and unquestioning identification and integration within well defined political subcultures as well as unquestioning trust expressed through the 'voto di appartenenza', a vote based on shared values and views rather than on the rational consideration of a balance between benefits and costs. This is why, according to authors such as Schiavone, the downfall of traditional

political parties represented for Italians a loss which undermined their feelings of national belonging and left them utterly bewildered (Schiavone, 1998). The crisis of the DC, due to the scandals linked with the era of 'mani pulite' and the transformation undertaken by Italian society since the 1980s, described by Cartocci and Magatti as secularised and individualised, made it possible for the Northern League to dominate an area that had traditionally been governed by political and social actors close to the Catholic Church and embedded in the 'white' sub-culture (Cartocci, 1994; Diamanti, 1996; Magatti, 1998).

However, the interpretation of political subcultures as positive vehicles of identification was questioned by authors such as Galli della Loggia, Cartocci and Magatti, who argued rather that they provided alternative interpretations of the idea of the 'good life', contributing to delegitimising shared identities (Galli della Loggia, 1996; Cartocci, 1994, Magatti, 1998). As already underlined in the section on the influence of historical factors in the debate on national identity, Galli della Loggia actually accused the PCI of attempting to alienate identities different from the communist one by postulating that the communist identity was tantamount to Italian identity (Galli della Loggia, 1996). Cartocci also argued that political subcultures did not necessarily represent an opportunity for a common belonging but rather often represented an obstacle for the achievement of such a sense of belonging as they narrowed and limited the horizons of a more inclusive identification (Cartocci, 1994: 68). The author took as an example the opposing interpretations of the Resistance. These antagonistic points of view on past events prevented Italy from being founded on unitary and shared values and from turning feelings of trust and loyalty toward the state and the nation itself into a civil religion, as Rousseau had defined it (Cartocci, 1994). On the contrary, the failure of Italian institutions to create a cult of the state or at least a widespread attitude of respect and trust towards it made the Italian nation more

vulnerable to charges of illegitimacy, motivated by the attempt of one of the 'nations' within the nation to alienate the others.

According to Cartocci and Magatti, political subcultures had therefore contributed to underlining the division within the country and were not able to overcome internal conflicts and particularly the one between the North and the South, since the value of solidarity has always been seen as internal to each sub-culture rather than transversal and cross-cutting (Cartocci, 1994; Magatti, 1996). As a result of the opposing identities they supported, traditional subcultures inspired an exasperated version of 'localism', which made it easier for the Northern League to find its space in the political arena. The same authors also recognised that the Catholic subculture can be seen, to a certain extent, as supportive of a unitary identity. Nonetheless, the Catholic Church's stance for national unity was carried out through the use of a 'rhetoric of solidarity' that, according to Cartocci, relies on the idea of Catholic moral duty, rather than on the construction of common narratives and memories. This mechanism also applies to the Church's attitude towards immigration and immigrants, and will be analysed in more detail in Chapter II, which will focus specifically on the role of the Catholic Church in the debate on Italian identity and citizenship. At this point it is important to highlight how, according to intellectuals, the rise of the Northern League is quite closely linked with the Italian state's inability to tell its citizens a common narrative in order to promote and sustain a strong feeling of belonging.

The debate on the Northern League is particularly complex and still in progress, which is why it is necessary to specify that the analysis carried out in this chapter does not represent a systematic or an exhaustive investigation, but rather a general outline of the perspectives from which the phenomenon has been analysed. It is also intended to provide a further explanation of the perceived difficulty that Italy has always had and still has in building a strong

sense of belonging based on a common past and a shared memory, as well as to show that intellectuals are attempting to counteract the identity construction work carried out by the Northern League with a strong emphasis on the need for a new national narrative which is able to strengthen territorial ties and North-South solidarity. In this way some intellectuals and opinion makers openly acknowledge the need to revisit current narratives of Italianness, constructing powerful stories of internal unity and solidarity which stretch back to the past and forward into the future. Yet these same intellectuals do not appear to include solidarity with immigrants in their vision of a renewed sense of national identity. It is precisely the absence of the issue of immigration from recent and current debates upon, and need for, a strong Italian national identity which will be examined in the next sections.

8. The debate on the influence of immigration on Italian identity

The analysis of the and political factors which have influenced the discussion on Italian identity carried out until this point aimed to show which topics and issues Italian intellectuals have been debating and popularising. To a certain extent, it also represents the main explanation for the lack of interest on the part of intellectuals in a different side of the same debate, which focuses on the influence of immigration on the definition of Italianess. The weakness of this debate can be partially accounted for by intellectuals' inclination to privilege other cultural and political matters linked with the concept of identity such as the interpretations of the Resistance and the rise of the Northern League previously analysed. This explains why the debate on immigration has never developed or became systematic and coherent. Indeed, it is rather constituted by separate individual interventions which rarely engage in a dialogue and which seem to be occasional and polemical in nature. Since the interest of Italian

intellectuals has been stimulated and raised mainly by internal factors, both historical and political ones, not much attention has been and is being paid to seemingly external phenomena, such as immigration, which nevertheless constitute an important challenge for the future of the country and particularly for a redefinition of the meaning of national identity.

The need to look at immigration comes from a rational consideration of the fact that various statistical surveys identify Italy as the third or fourth country of immigration after France, Germany and Britain and that the same statistics present the arrival of immigrants in Italy as a rapidly growing trend, as already stated in the Introduction to this thesis (Melotti, 2004). This section will provide a general introduction to the more recent discussion on immigration and national identity as addressed by Umberto Melotti, who appears to be the only intellectual to reflect on the chronology of the discussion and to take stock of the debate in progress.

According to sociologist Melotti, the current Italian political and ideological discourse on the impact of immigration is characterised by exacerbated tones and heated polemics. During the early 1980s, some intellectuals engaged in the debate on immigration and suggested ways to address this – at that time new – phenomenon – a new model of society based on what they defined as ‘*integrazione sociale*’, which involved ‘*la salvaguardia dell’identità degli immigrati*’ (Melotti, 2004: 162). This solution was soon replaced by what the author refers to a naive and questionable idea of multicultural society, which was supposed to solve every problem all of a sudden according to intellectuals such as Ferrarotti, Ghirelli, Maciotti, who formulated it and advocated that the main result of promoting such a society would consist of an ‘*arricchimento culturale*’ (Ibid.). As some journalists such as Bocca and Lerner state, many other scholars closed their eyes in the face of a complex situation and attributed all the problems linked to

immigration to the supposed racism of Italians (Bocca, 1998; Lerner, 1989; Melotti, 2004:162). Melotti thinks that, although serious episodes of racism have happened in Italy, analysing Italians' xenophobic behaviour as some authors such as Balbo and Manconi do, does not help to build a strong debate on the impact of the massive arrivals of people with different cultural and ethnic origins in the country. Moreover, he argues that these academics, in focusing on the Italians' presumed racism, did nothing more than apply French key-concepts of racism to the Italian case. Explanations which were suited to the French situation have been 'slavishly repeated' by these intellectuals whereas, according to Melotti, these models of interpretation are not only questionable, but can even be misleading if applied to the Italian context (Melotti, 2004: 163).

Clearly, Melotti's polemical account of the debate shows that he does not agree with the idea that multiculturalism can solve the issues raised by immigration. However, despite his criticism of such a position and although he considers this discussion as unhelpful in addressing the phenomenon of immigration, he does not engage with other perspectives nor does he add anything new to the debate. Melotti also focuses on Italian identity and its perceived weakness, attributing it to numerous and strongly interconnected reasons. The first reason he mentions is related to an internal factor: the role of political subcultures. According to him, Italy has long suffered from the influence of two dominant subcultures, the Catholic and the Communist, which have fostered a sense of mistrust in, and even rejection of, the state (Melotti, 2004: 169). The second reason is linked with immigration, but rather than engaging with the challenges that it poses to Italian society today, Melotti embarks on a long digression on the origins of Italians' suspicion towards foreigners, going as far as listing the attempt of the Turkish Agca to kill the Pope in 1981 and the song of the river Piave with its verse 'Va fuori d'italia, va fuori straniero' (Melotti, 2004: 172).

Even though Melotti's analysis has ambitious intents, its limit is that it focuses very much on the concept of racism, despite its criticism of the same attitude in other authors, as well as in being as inward-looking as the other perspectives previously examined. Moreover, he focuses on the justification of racist or exclusionary attitudes that date back to WWII, rather than addressing the new issues raised by the foreign presence within the country. Finally and more importantly, despite the fact that he reflects on both national identity and immigration, he never links the two and does not reflect on the influence that the latter has or might have on the re-definition of Italianness. Nevertheless, Melotti's work does provide a general overview, even if it is not exhaustive, of the manner in which intellectuals have participated in the debate on national identity and immigration, and supplies a number of valid reasons for the weakness of this debate.

Rusconi's analysis of immigration is fairly isolated. As we saw, this is not the case when he discusses the Northern League or the interpretations of the Resistance in order to explain the weakness of Italian identity, since these topics gave rise to a well-publicised discussion with the other authors previously mentioned in this work. Rusconi starts his examination of immigration and citizenship by stating that one of the most important consequences of the nation-state is the creation of an equivalence between citizenship and nationality as part of contemporary culture. As he argues, asking a foreigner what nationality s/he belongs to and of which country s/he is a citizen is not something spontaneous, since it is not so evident that the two things - nationality and citizenship - are different and separate concepts. The nation-state attributes to its citizens political rights granted by citizenship, at the same moment that it provides them with a nationality. Nevertheless, the concept of nationality also works as a limit which, for instance, prevents the automatic granting of the same rights to citizens belonging to another nation, even if the latter is an ally and the relationship between the two nations is particularly good (Rusconi, 1993).

According to Rusconi, the relatively new necessity to distinguish between and keep separate the idea of nation and that of citizenship comes from two different and recent phenomena. The first was attributed to the imminent (at the time of Rusconi's writing) introduction of European citizenship. The second phenomenon was the presence of immigrants 'che godono o aspirano a godere alcuni diritti civili, sociali e persino politici di cittadinanza del paese di insediamento pur mantenendo (volontariamente o coattivamente) una nazionalità straniera' (Rusconi, 1993: 167).

Rusconi bases his ideas on a primarily structural difference between immigration in Europe in the past compared to today. The first significant aspect is that, in the past, immigrants have been invited to some European countries in order to satisfy the need for a workforce during a period of economic boom, whereas immigration has been officially discouraged in Europe since the 1970s. The second is that in the past immigrants tended to arrive almost entirely from other European countries, whereas since the second half of the 1960s they have started coming from outside Europe, and especially from Africa and Asia, which meant that they are defined by 'culture, stili di vita e "colore" palesemente "diversi"' (Rusconi, 1993: 168). Rusconi states: 'A questo punto la percezione collettiva dell'intero fenomeno migratorio non poteva non assumere in Europa toni di allarme sociale, con la mobilitazione di paure profonde che ha portato a veri e propri comportamenti xenofobi e violenze razziste [...] La maggior parte della popolazione europea non ha le idee chiare sulle conseguenze economiche della immigrazione: gli immigrati creano disoccupazione oppure coprono posti abbandonati dagli autoctoni?' (Rusconi, 1993: 168-169). This type of worry has been used as a means for justifying xenophobic intolerance. Nonetheless, the author suspects these anxieties to be mere instruments for giving already existing prejudice and fears a rational basis, instead of being the cause of these prejudices. For the first time in European history, a considerable part of citizens have come into contact with

populations of different ethnic origins and cultures. Racism in its traditional form, that until the 1940s was culturally accepted and even encouraged, has now been rejected. Nonetheless, the idea that immigration contributes to the degeneration of society and the environment, which citizens try to protect, is presented as an undeniable fact. 'Non è un caso che nell'immagine pubblica l'immigrazione è catalogata (e vissuta) come una nuova specie di patologia sociale, da accostare alla disoccupazione, alla criminalità organizzata o all'inquinamento (quando addirittura non è vista come somma di queste patologie)' (Rusconi, 1993: 169).

According to Rusconi, this last interpretation of immigration very frequently represents the ground on which political parties compete with each other: from Le Pen's France to Austria and Germany, it contributes to reinforcing xenophobic movements, as well as political actors such as the Northern League in Italy, which transform latent racist feelings and anxieties into political claims. The result of these irrational worries as well as the action of political parties such as the Northern League is that the focus of the discourse on immigration is no longer on how to deal with this trend but rather on how to make the boundaries impenetrable. While all European countries agree on the urgency of finding adequate means to stop irregular immigration, they do not seem to have a common strategy on anything else as, for instance, the granting of civil rights or free circulation within Europe for regular immigrants. Different governments react in different ways to immigrants' requests and produce distinct laws on citizenship, education, work, religion, to the extent that these strictly national responses to immigration could represent one of the issues which the (future) European Union (will) find more difficult to face in a unitary way (Rusconi, 1993: 168-173).

Although the premises of Rusconi's analysis are the denunciation of the lack of discussion on the impact of immigration on national identity and the critique of the position that intellectuals are

assuming within the debate and the weakness of their arguments, he does not focus upon the meaning of 'Italianness' that immigration will inevitably put into question, as it has done in other European countries. On the other hand, he takes into account the issue from the perspective of the immigrants themselves. Indeed, he examines how this relatively new phenomenon – the arrival of immigrants in European countries - will influence the responses to their particular claims and the definition of a new citizenship, which for the first time, in his view, has to be unattached and independent from the concept of nationality. Even though he does not go further in discussing how Italianness might (or indeed ought to) change, other than becoming detached from the idea of citizenship, Rusconi represents one of the few voices in the Italian debate on the subject of national identity in connection with immigration and his analysis attempts to provide definitions of concepts such as solidarity, rational choice versus spontaneous belonging, and indeed the difference between nationality and citizenship.

9. Italian journalists and the debate on immigration

Currently there are very few journalists taking part in a debate characterised, as we saw, by isolated positions and occasional polemical exchanges. The only journalist who has systematically discussed immigration and its impact on Italian society and culture is Magdi Allam. Allam, a moderate Muslim intellectual who writes for *Corriere della Sera*, recently found himself at the centre of a heated debate when he converted to Catholicism and chose a new middle name (Cristiano), which he uses to sign his editorials against radical Islam. Allam focuses almost exclusively on Muslim immigration and mainly advocates the necessity of regulating the dialogue between Muslim leaders and the Italian government. He believes, indeed, that the most extremist Muslim representatives should not be allowed to take part in any dialogue with Italian

institutions. He also thinks that Italians should value and recognise their historical origins as Catholics, which should never be neglected. Catholicism has to be considered a secularised religion today but, nevertheless, the journalist argues, it is vital not to undervalue the importance of this religion in order to understand who Italians are today and how the state and citizens should react to Muslim claims. Allam has also written about the crisis of the multicultural model adopted by the Netherlands which, according to him, has recently proved to be an inadequate means to address problems posed by immigration, especially since the assassination of film director Theo Van Gogh (Allam, 2004). The journalist believes that the only way that Muslims can live in Italy is by accepting the rules of the state and recognising the values shared by the citizens which underpin their national identity (Allam, 28/04/2005).

Allam warns of the dangers of dual identities and different systems of education and argues, for instance, that Muslim schools should not be allowed in Italy, as they do not contribute to the integration of immigrants but instead create obstacles to this (Allam, 2006a; Allam, 2006b). He believes that fundamentalism must not be given a place in Italian society and that the state should not enter into dialogue with any fundamentalist Muslim leaders. Although Allam focuses on immigration and its impact on identity, he, as well as many others, proceeds in his analysis to consider how the identity of immigrants has to change in order for them to assimilate, or integrate into Italian society. He does not focus on how the collective understanding of Italian identity might need to change and become more pluralist under the influence of, in this case, Muslim immigration. On the contrary, Allam offers constant warnings on the risk of Italians being Islamised by the most extremist part of the Muslim community, which, according to him, is planning to replace the state's laws with its own rules based on religion. This concern is shared by many representatives of the Catholic Church, as will be seen later on in this thesis, as well as by

other intellectuals, for instance Oriana Fallaci. Indeed the journalist and writer immediately after 9/11 expressed her opinion in less politically correct terms and with 'a rage and a pride' which did not contribute to open a dialogue on the theme but rather have the opposite effect. Allam is therefore one of the very few who have provided a link between immigration and the meaning of identity, yet he has done so by advocating not a more pluralist and inclusionary understanding of national belonging, but rather the revival of an organic and exclusionary sense of community.

One of the very rare occasions in which intellectuals have been involved in a public discussion on immigration in the national newspapers is when, on 29 September 2001, the editor of *Corriere della Sera*, Ferruccio de Bortoli, published Oriana Fallaci's article entitled 'La rabbia e l'orgoglio', which later became the first in a series of books about Muslim immigration in Italy. Fallaci's intervention cannot be considered a contribution to an intellectual debate since it was conceived primarily as an uncompromising statement of her strong personal position on what she calls 'la conquista dell'Italia da parte dei Mussulmani' and not as the start of an open debate, as proved by the fact that Fallaci was not interested in addressing the controversy that her article raised. Moreover, the reactions to Fallaci's article and book cannot be considered part of a 'serious' debate on immigration either, since, despite showing strong opposition to Fallaci's views, they were quite similar in style and register. Despite its huge impact on national public opinion and the fact that some intellectuals, such as Giovanni Sartori and the writer Dacia Maraini, tried to analyse what Fallaci had expressed in her article from a serious perspective, most of the reactions aimed at undermining Fallaci by accusing her of being out of her mind, as well as old and ill, rather than attempting to refute her radical ideas. Intellectuals and journalists did not consider this episode an incentive to open a serious discussion on immigration but instead ignored it. Even Maraini and Sartori fell into the trap of not being able to steer the discussion

away from Fallaci's populist and offensive register (Maraini, 2001; Sartori, 2001).

10. Italian philosophers: unheard voices

The weakness of the participation of intellectuals in the debate on immigration, and thus consequently of the debate itself, does not concern only intellectuals in the form of academics, journalists and writers but also Italian philosophers. The latter have not focused on 'Italianness' either, although many of them are, or have been, working on subjects such as tolerance and the relation between equality and freedom. Anna Elisabetta Galeotti, for instance, has examined the idea of toleration and its different meanings from both a perfectionist liberal and a neutralist liberal perspective (Galeotti, 1994). As a case study, she discussed the controversy which developed as a result of two Muslim students wearing the chador in France, but her analysis of concepts such as identity and autonomy did not lead her to examine Italian identity or its relation to immigration. Similarly, in her book *Tolleranza*, Maria Laura Lanzillo addresses the notion of toleration and the interpretation of the concept provided by philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke, Hume and Voltaire without analysing the meaning that toleration has today or the development of multiculturalism in contemporary democracies (Lanzillo, 2001). Norberto Bobbio too focused on the relation between equality and freedom as premises for a democratic society as well as on the concept of citizenship, but despite this analysis, he considered globalisation and technological change as the challenges that the nation-state and national identity have to face, to a larger extent than immigration (Bobbio, 1995). Moreover, the philosopher has always been more interested in the influence that the different interpretations of the Resistance have had on Italian identity, which have been discussed in the first section of this chapter, rather than in the role of immigration in a renewed construction of Italianness.

A philosopher who has worked on identity in a context that can be applied to the concept of difference with reference to multicultural societies, and who advocates the necessity of finding harmony in the coexistence of difference is Ermanno Bencivenga. His work, *Oltre la tolleranza*, examines the different definitions of the concept that philosophers have developed in the past, and elaborates a new idea of the ego being capable of facing the challenges posed by difference in contemporary Western societies (Bencivenga, 1992). Bencivenga argues that modern societies seem to deal with political issues in an irrational manner. Their irrationality consists in devising solutions to new problems and challenges, which are limited and short-termist, as they do not look to the future and do not take into consideration their long-term consequences. Following Bencivenga, the concept of toleration implies a political ontology according to which a community is made up of individuals intended as non-divisible and non-analysable substances. Each of these individuals is a spontaneous source of projects and needs. From a political perspective, the will and desires of individuals are pure and simple logical atoms and the only politically legitimate behaviour towards them, is to tolerate them. The individual indeed becomes an arbitrary source of categorical requests: his/her interest in other individuals, and acknowledgement of the equality of others, is left to generic chance and good will. In Bencivenga's opinion, what is needed is a new type of individual who has a closer relationship with the 'other' and whose will is something more than an arbitrary potentiality. The deconstruction of the subject can be achieved only through dialogue, a kind of dialogue in which different positions face each other and in which the interlocutors are aware of the impossibility of finding a final answer, but nevertheless keep asking and answering in order to find it. In this dialogue, the speaker goes into a crisis and causes a crisis for the other questioners. This forces every interlocutor to develop his/her ideas and him/herself. The interlocutors do not constitute the subjects; rather, the dialogue

itself is the subject. Bencivenga refuses the traditional concepts of exclusion and assimilation of difference. We need the other, the difference, we need it to be what we are. Our plural and divided subject would be annihilated if it did not have interlocutors to dialogue with. The only way to guarantee this dialogue is to promote education, intended as a long-term project. Education is an infinite project: it cannot be interrupted without destroying all the results it has already produced. If society stops asking questions, finding answers and adding new details and positions, the role played by education will lose its meaning and value. In such a society toleration is just a contingent and inadequate solution to the coexistence of differences within a liberal democracy. What the author thinks a plural society needs in order to find agreement within the coexistence of differences is a process of education to infinite dialogue, rather than in a passive toleration of otherness (Bencivenga, 1992).

When Bencivenga refers to education, he does not intend it in its traditional meaning or as something depending on the state. In his perspective, education has to be individual and internal to the subject and consists in the acknowledgement that one constantly needs difference in order to engage in a dialogue and develop himself/herself.

In dealing with the idea of ‘otherness’, Italian philosophers seem to focus on a concept of toleration, that is already problematic as it implies the superiority of a group over another which has to be ‘tolerated’, whereas the idea of ‘inclusion’ does not feature in their works. This is clearly not the only or the main reason for their lack of interest in the debate on national identity and immigration. Indeed, not only have they not engaged in a dialogue, an attitude that they share with the other intellectuals considered in this chapter, but they also have to face the difficulty of applying their theoretical framework to the specific Italian situation. Moreover, as already highlighted when referring to the role of intellectuals in

general, Italian philosophers suffer from a state of alienation which is due to their 'specialisation' and the language they use to address specific issues, that 'lingua franca' typical of academics which contributes to isolate them and prevents their voices from being heard in the public sphere. Finally, their exclusion is also reinforced by the media system, which as stated earlier 'relies on personality' and addresses a general public of non-specialists. In this sense, an obscure language as well as a limited audience and the absence from the media, all contribute to create a filter, which keeps the philosophers' voices away from the public sphere and therefore makes them irrelevant in the already weak debate described above.

11. Conclusions

One of the aims of this chapter was to provide an overview of the role that Italian intellectuals have played in the debate on national identity and particularly on the influence immigration has and is likely to have on the process of (re)-construction of this identity, as advocated by many of them. The chapter started with an acknowledgement of a general lack of interest and participation on the part of academics, journalists and philosophers in the discussion on the issue. It recalled that, according to many scholars, the concept of national belonging has been recently widely discussed again, after fifty years during which it has been almost entirely neglected. In order to understand the reasons for the absence of the issue of immigration in the debate among intellectuals, this chapter has taken into account the different contexts in which national identity has been considered in the recent past and is still being debated today in Italy. This analysis of the current discussions which intellectuals have engaged in, particularly the one on the legacy of the Resistance and the one on the Northern League, provides a partial explanation for their lack of participation in the debate on immigration. Indeed, as this chapter tried to show, the

fact that intellectuals' attention has focused on internal historical and political factors and their influence on Italianness has pushed to the margins a relatively new phenomenon – immigration – which is deeply linked with the transformations that the concept of national identity is likely to go through in the imminent future.

Intellectuals who have been taking part in the different but related debates analysed in this chapter tend to identify in the lack of shared and authoritative 'narratives' the reason for a failure in building an unambiguous and strong Italian identity. This is a failure which they seem to attribute unanimously to the state and its institutions. As the first section of this chapter has shown, historians and academics, who have discussed the Resistance and its responsibility in making a unitary identity impossible for the country, can be grouped under two categories. On the one hand, there are the so-called revisionists, among them particularly Galli della Loggia, who believe it is impossible to find a remedy to Italy's divided memory. On the other hand, other intellectuals, such as Scoppola, think that a common memory of the Resistance can still be constructed today. Despite the fact that the majority of intellectuals agree that Italy lacks common symbols and values indispensable for a feeling of solidarity capable to keep the nation together, and despite their agreeing on attributing this failure to the state, none of them identifies the actors who nowadays should be telling this common story. They do believe that someone should have the responsibility to do so but, as Rusconi puts it, it is hard to say who should or could play this role. Interestingly, none of them even mentions the possibility of attributing this responsibility to his/her own category or to individuals who are part of that category. The only exception in this sense is the dialogue between Bobbio and De Felice, who agree on the necessity to revisit historical events in all their nuances and to turn Italy into a 'normal country' by reconciling its divided memories, even though their exchange exposes all the difficulties in achieving this aim.

The fact that intellectuals seemingly do not invest themselves with this responsibility of story-telling could imply that their role within our society is going through a crisis. Despite this being a concern in contemporary western societies, the detailed analysis of the discussion of the Resistance and the role of political parties after the war, carried out in the first section of this chapter, proves that intellectuals can take quite radical positions on important issues and have an impact on public opinion. Therefore, the lack of interest and participation in a debate on immigration has to be attributed to different factors than a crisis of the role of intellectuals in our society today. Or, at least, this crisis did not prevent them from taking upon themselves a role of leadership in central matters linked with identity but other than immigration.

Their influence on the perception of the Resistance is indeed huge and public opinion on the subject is shaped mostly by their interventions and the ideas they advocated. Moreover their taking a position on the matter also influences the way in which the state looks at it, as proved by several political choices such as the creation of a national commemoration, the Festa della Repubblica, established in July 2000, and of the Museum of the Resistance opened in July 2002 and the way they are entwined with the interventions of Italian intellectuals. The commemoration day for those killed by the Nazis at the Fosse Ardeatine on 24 March 1944 promoted by intellectuals close to the DS (Democratici di sinistra) represents another clear example of the influence of intellectuals on the state on matters linked to national identity and shared memories.

The case of the analysis of the Northern League is slightly more complex, since sociologists, political scientists and journalists have discussed it systematically but privileging some aspects and often neglecting others. Indeed, they seem to take into account only the reasons for the rise to power of the party and the means it used to succeed but not the type of national identity it has constructed and

the ways in which the latter differs from the traditional ones. Moreover, they do not seem to address the consequences that this new identity, characterised by being profoundly exclusionary, will have on both the general sense of national belonging experienced by citizens and the role and consequences of immigrants' presence in the country. A more detailed outline of the new imagined community and national identity constructed by the League and its effects on public opinion and on the state's policies toward immigration will be carried out in more depth in Chapter III, which will focus specifically on these aspects.

This chapter also attempted to identify the reasons why intellectuals seem to avoid considering immigration in a systematic and non episodic manner. A possible reason could be their acceptance of the dominant interpretation of immigration as a temporary phenomenon rather than an increasingly permanent trend. This would explain why they only consider single episodes without developing any broader analysis or clear position on the matter in general in order to provide long-term solutions or models of integration. This attitude is not characteristic only of intellectuals but, as the last chapter of this work will try to argue, is typical of the political system too and is reinforced by the media system.

Moving from the causes to the consequences of the weakness of the intellectuals' role in the debate on national identity and immigration, one of the aims of this study will be that of analysing the effects of this lack of contribution upon the political sphere and the state's decision-making as well as public opinion in general. The first outcome of such a lack of participation on the part of the intellectuals in the public sphere consists in their inability to influence the state's decisions on the matter, especially by comparison with other actors which are taking part in the debate, such as the Northern League and the Catholic Church. Despite their different motivations, as we shall see, these two actors share a similar attitude to the issue and often aim at the same goals. The

laws and policies on immigration and the ideas or ideologies inspiring them will be investigated in the last chapter of this thesis.

The effect of the absence of most prominent intellectuals from the debate on immigration upon public opinion and the citizens is quite complex since, as mentioned above, some of the works of philosophers and thinkers are not reachable by the majority of people. This is due to different reasons and particularly to the language in which they are expressed and their theoretical nature as well as to the filtering mechanisms exerted by the media. Consequently, the voices which could be heard the most have been those that have adopted an aggressive and uncompromising tone. The case of Oriana Fallaci is representative of this situation.

As a result of the intellectuals' silence, these aggressive positions are likely to determine a growing anxiety towards immigration and therefore indirectly provide the state with a widespread consensus for its restrictive policies towards immigration, based on the need to prevent any further arrival of immigrants, rather than facing it with a long-term and well thought-out strategy. Moreover, their absence from the public discussion on the theme and their lack of interest in being the subjects who tell the national 'narrative' to the country, determines a shift of power towards those actors which have engaged in the debate by putting forward their own narratives and presenting their ideas as objective and a-problematic, as this work will try to prove in the following chapters.

Chapter II

The Catholic Church and the debate on identity and immigration

‘Quieta non movere’

‘La Chiesa si può combattere; la Chiesa si può perseguitare; con la Chiesa si può patteggiare; ma la Chiesa non si può ignorare: è questo un dato di fatto che diciannove secoli di storia confermano’

(Stefano Jacini, speech given during the general discussion on the project for the Italian Constitution, 4 - 24 March 1947).

1. Introduction

While analysing the political factors which contributed to creating an Italian identity, the previous chapter focused, among other things, on the influence of political subcultures in shaping national belonging. It examined the ‘white’ subculture, linked with the Catholic Church, in order to prove how influential it has been in building a strong – although, according to some scholars, partial – sense of Italianness. This chapter aims to consider in more depth the role of the Catholic Church in the context of the wider debate on immigration and national identity. In order to accomplish this task it will start from a general overview of the debate on religion and politics in Western democracies as it developed since the 1980s. It will deal with the specific case of Italy and provide a brief account of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Italian State. It will then focus on the documents released in the last decade by some representatives of the Catholic hierarchy and particularly on the ‘nota pastorale’ written by Cardinal Giacomo Biffi, archbishop of Bologna, in 2000. It will question whether the

debate on immigration was triggered by particular circumstances, such as the so-called ‘march for the brotherhood between churches’, the opening of new Mosques and Sikh temples and the protest resulting from the removal of the crucifix from a school classroom following the request of Muslim citizens.

In doing so, this chapter will investigate to what extent these events and Biffi’s pastoral note mentioned above can be seen as related by a cause-effect link. It will address the following question: is the Church reacting to matters of law and order following widespread feelings of uncertainty and anxiety among ordinary citizens, often reinforced by the media? Or, rather, is it reacting to immigration in order to reassert its own power, which its own representatives often define as declining, at least in terms of active participation? The need to start from Biffi’s document comes from the fact that it can be considered the focus of the Church’s interventions on immigration and on the role the state should play in regulating the incoming flux of foreigners in the country. The analysis of this and other documents produced by prominent representatives of the Church, will involve a discussion of certain key concepts indispensable for understanding the ongoing debate on the issue, such as those of ‘fundamentalism’, ‘extremism’, ‘otherness’ and ‘freedom of speech’.

Following this, the reactions of different groups and individuals to this pastoral note will be analysed. First of all the response of various Catholic representatives will be taken into account, showing that the Church’s position on the matter became more radical after 2000. This section will also highlight how within the Church there are different if not opposing positions on the issue, where the main opposition pits the Pope and the hierarchy on one side and Catholic voluntary associations as well as a few individual parish priests close to anti-globalisation movements on the other. This chapter will also compare and contrast the documents approved by the Pope, such as the *Dominus Jesus*, written by the

then Cardinal Ratzinger, with other documents which represent personal positions and have not been officially commented on by the Pope, such as Cardinal Giacomo Biffi's pastoral note. The analysis will also examine sermons and speeches by ordinary priests who either disagreed with the pastoral note or praised Biffi for it, as well as the reaction of Italian journalists, politicians and opinion makers to the same document. Finally the reactions of the representatives of other religions, and particularly those from the Muslim community, will be analysed.

The main aim of this work is to address the circumstances surrounding, and the strategies and the means adopted by the Church to open the debate on immigration, looking both at its public discourse on the issue and its influence on the state's policy-making in this field. It will argue that the positions taken by Church representatives on the everyday 'emergencies' linked with the arrival of immigrants in the country often represent no more than a pretext for reasserting the importance of certain values. In this sense, the debate on immigration contributes to constructing a highly visible space in which to develop a broader dialogue – albeit often a monologue rather than a dialogue - on a subject related to immigration but closer to the interests and needs of the Church: the identity of Italians as Catholics and, as a consequence, the necessity to defend and protect this traditional identity against its potential detractors.

The analysis of the above mentioned documents and the reactions to them will try to prove three main points. Firstly, as already stated, it will be argued that the debate on immigration has been 'exploited' by the Catholic Church to remark upon the need for a stronger feeling of national belonging strictly linked with Italy's 'Catholic origins'. In this sense the issue of immigration worked as an opportunity to reassert the importance of Catholicism in Italian history and in the nation-building process as well as the supremacy of Christian values vis-à-vis both alternative ideas of the good life

and a much feared growing relativism. Secondly, this chapter will assess the strategy followed by the Church to achieve national relevance and go beyond the boundaries of an internal Catholic reflection. This strategy consists in claiming for itself a right to freedom of speech which, according to the Church, is not yet guaranteed by the State. This right to express ideas also includes the right and duty on the part of the Church not only to put forward a particular view of the good life but also that of intervening in the public sphere by suggesting to the State how to react to issues raised by the presence of immigrants in the country. In this respect, the Church assumes a dual and contradictory role: on the one hand, it intervenes in matters related to public administration such as law and order, on the other hand, it officially denies its responsibility in making decisions in this sphere, on the basis that it is not its duty to deal with such issues. As a result, the Church constantly engages in polemics and discussions on immigration, going so far as suggesting practical solutions to deal with this phenomenon, but at the same time it promotes a rhetoric of political disengagement. Finally, this chapter will explore the concept of rationality and how it has been used to justify certain statements and radical positions on immigration and on the superiority of Catholic values. In particular, it will focus on the assumption that all human beings provided with common sense are Catholics. This is an idea reinforced by various representatives of the Church, such as Cardinal Biffi, throughout the debate on immigration. One of the aims of this chapter is to unveil the dynamics of such statements to show how they are often based on authority rather than on rationality, justified by an old tradition so unquestioned for centuries as to become self-evident. It will show how misleading this syllogism can be, as it uses as interchangeable terms deeply different concepts such as those of nationality, citizenship and religious belonging, with the result of providing a picture of Italians, where, for instance, Muslims are referred to as immigrants, neglecting the fact that many of them are actually Italian citizens.

The main questions which underlie this chapter are therefore the following: how and to what extent does the Catholic Church influence the debate on national identity and immigration? To what extent does it reach public opinion and shape it? And finally: what impact does it have on the state's decision making on this matter? By answering these questions, this chapter will argue that the Church is putting forward an original model of identity and citizenship based on the concept of 'selective solidarity', while seemingly aspiring to the construction of a quasi-theocratic state where the concepts of religious and national belonging coincide. It will also suggest that this approach to the phenomenon and the double role played by the Church as a point of reference for Italians and as a victim of new enemies contribute to reinforcing the citizens' growing anxieties towards immigration and provide the state with a general consensus for its restrictive policies towards the arrival of both legal and illegal immigrants to the country.

2. The general debate on religion and its impact on politics

The post-modern era, usually defined against the concepts of globalisation, mobility and secularism, is seemingly characterised by the decline of traditional common values based on moral judgment. Such common values have been replaced by new set of criteria capable of enabling an interpretation of the world based on the tangible progress achieved in the fields of economy and science, supposedly detached from any belief, faith or spirituality, which have been relegated to the private sphere.

In these 'liquid' times (Bauman, 2006) a growing number of scholars would today agree with Jacini's concern about the impossibility of neglecting the role of the Catholic Church and more in general of religion, in the analysis of contemporary societies and the mechanisms and common patterns according to which they work and develop.

As Jelen and Chandler (1996: 142) explain, scholarly research has shown in over a decade that religion is an important source of political attitudes. 'Indeed a number of analysts have suggested that the West in general and the United States in particular, are in the midst of a "culture war", in which religiously based values supplant economic interests as the basis for political conflict and mobilization' (Hunter, 1991; see also Hayes, 1995; Hammond et al., 1994; Kellstedt et al., 1994).

Since the late 1980s, religion has therefore come back to centre stage in the debate on democracy, political participation and the construction of identity. In particular, scholars have started analysing its role from different perspectives and disciplines, ranging from religious and cultural studies to international relations, from social and welfare studies to trans-national migration studies. Religion has emerged as an important factor in order to explain not only the nature of conflict in contemporary societies but also the construction of national, multiple and collective identities, the behaviour of political parties and social movements, the process of inclusion and exclusion, attitudes towards European citizenship and the reactions to, and critique of, modernity and post-modernity. The development of these fields of research and the respective questions they have generated and attempted to answer have determined a convergence on the part of academics from different disciplines in the debate on the role of religion in our democracies.

This section aims to briefly outline the state of the debate on these issues and the general conclusion academics have drawn from their analysis of religion and its impact on identity and politics. This broader picture of the role of 'churches' in national and international political life will provide a general background for the analysis of a specific case study: that of the Italian-based Catholic Church and its role in the public discussion on national identity and immigration. Indeed, despite the fact that most of the studies on the

role of religion in our democracies come from the American debate on the issue and draw their conclusions from the empirical studies conducted in the United States, the general discussion and its conclusions can well be applied to the rest of the Western world, including Italy.

The revival of interest in the dilemmas linked to morality and beliefs was triggered by a general acknowledgment on the part of scholars that historically religion has greatly contributed to the emergence and differentiation of modern nation-states and their capacity to grant citizenship and representation as well as to mobilise participation in political choices. The intellectuals who are taking part in the debate tend to focus on the process through which traditional religions have redefined themselves in the post-modern era, how they have shaped a new (political) message in order to maintain, increase or regain support, and the extent of their influence on local, national and super-national politics.

This renewed awareness of the need to analyse institutionalised forms of belief and their engagement in replacing the vacuum left by the current dominance of economic values (Jelen and Chandler, 1996), has brought scholars to investigate the links between secularised or civil religion in the era of globalisation and the process of identity building (Cochran, 1981; Seidler, 1986). Indeed, the central question of these studies – ‘how does religion react to modernity?’ (Seidler, 1986) – implies a broader investigation of themes related to group identity (Leege and Kellsted, 1993); religion as an interest group (Wilcox, Jelen and Leege, 1993; Warner, 2000), capable of mobilising people at a local level (Greenberg, 2000); the ability/inability of religious groups to foster trust and horizontal links (La Porta, et al., 1997) and finally their role in enabling citizens to sustain multiple identities as transnational migrants who take the church as the *trait d’union* between their homeland and the host country (Voye, 1999).

Moreover, these recent investigations into the role of religion in democratic societies have extended to looking at its impact on politics and its relationship with international, national and local governments. This analysis revolves around a fundamental double question which scholars such as Jelen and Segers have formulated as follows: ‘Are there distinctive contributions that religion can make to political discourse?’ and ‘Are there special reasons for limiting religions’ role in political discourse?’ Jelen and Segers, 1998: ix). Regardless of the different answers given by scholars to this issue, the question itself already implies the acknowledgement that religion matters in politics and it matters in the making and breaking of alliances with political parties, therefore representing a central factor in the dynamics of allocating power to competing political actors (Warner, 2000: 17). As a result, another field of investigation is represented by the behaviour of political parties, and particularly European Christian Democratic Parties, and their need to compromise with religion to gain the consensus of a considerable sector of society (Cochran, 1981). Indeed, as Warner (2000) argues by quoting Antonio Gramsci, religion does not formally differ from other ideologies and therefore deserves an accurate analysis of its representation in politics and its place in the competition between different actors to gain visibility and space in the public sphere. Indeed, religion, similarly to other ideologies, ‘provides an interpretative map of the world, a system for evaluating the justice and distributive schemes as well as ethical and behavioural codes to follow’ (Warner, 2000: 17). Acknowledging this implies the recognition of religious organizations and particularly the Catholic Church as a ‘strategic, calculating and influence-maximizing organization’ (Ibid.).

Scholars seem to agree that ‘there is little doubt that, historically, religion was a major organizing system in the emergence of modern nation states’, even though it has often been neglected by historians and sociologists who, for a long time, seemed to identify the nation with its geographical position and the common history

and language of its people (Hornsby-Smith, 1999: 172). Nevertheless, 'it has generally been recognised that a major component in culture has been the dominant religion, its institutional arrangements, its relationship with the state and with the social and political elites, rituals of memory and celebration, its values and moral beliefs system and so on' (Ibid.). As Cochran argues referring to the United States of America but also to the West in general, 'whatever one might think in the abstract about the desirability of religious commitment in political life, the concrete fact of American history demonstrates that the issue was settled generations ago. Like it or not. Americans are religious people. Religion has played a major role in the chief development of our history' (Cochran, 1981: x). The scholar recalls the exchange between Segers and Jelene on the legitimacy and utility of American institutions and the role of religion in recognising and promoting such authorities, all issues which revolve around the concept of 'civil religion'.

The core of the question therefore is investigating whether democratic societies need religion in order to survive or can find a social 'glue' in other common beliefs and dominant ideologies. In other words, scholars discuss the possibility for a nation to be secular and yet find unity and national cohesion in a different set of traditions and myths. Segers seems to reject the possibility of a society detached from religion and its values whereas Jelene believes in the alternative of 'secular creed foundation'. However, both recognise the actual great influence of the Christian churches and organisations upon public debates on themes such as those of 'abortion, gay rights and sexually explicit content in television, movies and music, and on the Internet'. Both scholars also recognise that these discussions and the Church's support of certain political parties have often determined the results of American elections, not rarely achieved through the exploitation of themes linked to family values perceived today to be under the constant challenge of different life styles (Jelen and Segers, 1998: xi).

Regardless of the different answers these authors give to the dilemma on whether the foundations of a nation's culture rely on 'firm moral ground' derived from religion or rather on individual choices and progressive forces of cultural change, both acknowledge that the debate on the public role of religion necessarily opens a debate on the idea of identity and national belonging. As Cochran argues, religion can contribute to a democratic dialogue, which is why, according to him, political actors 'must tolerate beliefs and practices that diverge from their own, even those they find deeply offensive' (Cochran, 1981: xvi). Moreover, they also have to be ready to accept religious arguments in public debates, and it is their duty to counterbalance them using 'arguments and ideas that everyone can understand and at least potentially accept, otherwise they will never be able to persuade anyone'. Finally, they must be willing to compromise rather than to radicalise their own positions (Ibid.). This willingness to adapt and compromise does not necessarily imply a positive judgment of religious groups as political actors: if Segers underlines the central role religion has always had in modern history, Jelene believes that religious groups have often proved 'too intolerant and uncivil' as well as too concerned with their own aim to participate in a dialogue which has to be based on a democratic 'give and take'. As the scholar states, this incompatibility of religion and democratic political dialogue comes from the impossibility for churches and organisations to be true to themselves and their theological concerns and faithful to democratic values at the same time. The difficulty in communication between the two spheres depends also on the language they use to convey their messages: the specific unique vocabulary of the Church and a publicly accessible language which the state has to use to address citizens (Ibid.).

The new element in the dialogue between Jelene and Seger consists in opening the way to another 'dilemma' linked to religion: that of language and its accessibility to common individuals and the gap between trust and rational choice, which has been analysed by

many other scholars while attempting to set the necessary conditions following which religions and churches can be given a role in the political arena. For religious groups seeking visibility in the public sphere, Cochran seems to advocate an internal democratic discourse. Indeed, 'political actors will not take particularly seriously monolithic communities without internal freedom that seek a place at a pluralistic table'. Another condition for inclusion in the public arena is again linked to language and prescribes the need for churches and religious groups to abandon their specific terms and theological references for a 'neutral language' typical of a public open dialogue. However, this is a neutrality which Cochran defines as 'impossible', showing as much as Jelene a lack of faith in the churches' ability to transform and adapt in order to gain respect in politics (Cochran, 1981: xvi).

A clear example of the influence of religion in international affairs and in the process of identity-building comes from recent studies on the concept of European citizenship. Scholars such as Schlesinger and Foret (2006), Hornsby-Smith (1999), Voyer (1997), Boswell (1994) and Nelsen, Guth and Fraser (2001), who have investigated the attitude of mainstream religion towards Europe, have come to the conclusion that it is possible to group European religions into three dominant dichotomies: Northern Protestantism vs. Southern Catholicism, Western Catholicism vs. Eastern Orthodoxy and Christian Europe vs. Muslim Turkey. They agree on the fact that Catholicism has played a fundamental role in the process of European integration. Indeed, the Catholic Church inspired the attitude of Christian Democratic Parties whose values are traditionally based on 'integration, compromise, accommodation and pluralism', as proved by their positive response to the project of a monetary union (Hanley, 1994: 2). According to the outcomes of studies conducted since the late 1980s, Christian Democratic Parties more than others have shown explicit support for a supranational identity and seen 'European integration as a means to overcome nationalism' (Hanley, 1994: 8).

The same scholars argue that, on the contrary, Protestant countries are usually Eurosceptic and more interested in the affirmation of national and regional identities (Voye, 1999: 281). Moreover, they perceive a strong differentiation between the Church and the state as desirable (Willaime, 1995: 320; Voye, 1999: 281). As Voye recalls, among the first twelve countries which joined the European Union, seven were quasi-exclusively Catholic (Voye, 1999: 281). Vincent goes as far as to say that even the EU flag with its stars reminds Europeans of their Catholic origins since it is a clear reference to the veil of the Virgin Mary (Vincent, 1993: 79). The Catholic Church's interest in the European project has been welcomed by political forces working for its realisation as it offers, as an alternative to a purely economic union, that of a Europe unified by religion and therefore clearly different from the Arabic and Muslim world (as proved by the difficulties of allowing Turkey to join the 'Christian club') (Voye, 1999: 280). In this respect, both the Church and national political parties are in the ideal position to pursue their particular aims while publicly being perceived as committed – as Voye puts it – 'to giving a soul to Europe' (Ibid.).

Regarding the impact of religions on national and international affairs, scholars seem to agree on the fact that the Catholic Church, as well as many other churches, can be considered as an interest group. Studying these interest groups involves an analysis of the process of identity building they promote in order to be successful, which means retaining a central role in societies characterised by a growing secularism and globalisation. Indeed, as Warner recalls, after World War II the Catholic Church faced the challenge of establishing itself again in the new democratic nation states. In order to do so, it necessarily had to form alliances with political parties. Following this strategy, the Catholic Church behaved as 'an interest group whose actions can be modelled as if it were a firm in a market seeking a supplier of goods' (Warner, 2000: 4). Forming or breaking an alliance depends on how successful the Church is in pleasing its followers and obtaining benefits for them and for itself

(Ibid.). In this sense, the Church becomes a representative of a particular subgroup in society that needs a connection to political parties in order to be represented in the public sphere, a sort of 'transmission belt', which passes the requests of citizens to the political system (Eldersveld, 1964; Lawson, 1980; Becker, 1983; Zeigler, 1985; Warner, 2000). Alternatively, as Panebianco explains, churches create their own parties as in the case of the Catholic Church and the Italian Christian Democratic Party, which is 'a party born from the direct will of religious institutions' (Panebianco, 1992: 229). The concept upon which all scholars insist is that interest groups 'provide an important link between the government and the governed' (Thomas, 1993: 1) and that the struggle in which the Church is involved is mainly aimed at confirming and reinforcing its 'monopoly of power' (Warner, 2000: 21).

In order to understand better the power of the Church in national and international politics, researchers have then started applying theories used to analyse group identity and interest groups to religious organisations. After decades of silence on this matter, a renewed interest in identity building started emerging in the 1980s and has coincided with the revival of the debate on the role of religion in secular democracies. Since then, scholars have come to generally similar conclusions regarding group identification and features. Tajfel (1981) argues that there are two main characteristics typical of group identification: an awareness of membership and psychological attachment to the group, whereas those who feel attached to the group and its values but do not see themselves as members can be considered as exhibiting group sympathy (Conover, 1986). According to Wilcox, Jelene and Legge (1993), group consciousness includes different factors that scholars have classified as follows: group identification; power discontent ('the belief that your group has less power than it deserves'); system blaming ('the belief that your group is disadvantaged by the system and does not deserve its subordinate position'); and

orientation toward collective action (Wilcox, Jelene and Leege, 1993: 72; Miller, Gurin and Gurin, 1980; Miller et al., 1981; Gurin, 1985; Klein, 1984; Cook, 1989).

Other scholars have analysed ‘polarized group affect’, the affinity towards members of one’s own group and hostility towards members of different groups: both attitudes and group consciousness determine a more active political participation on the part of members (Wilcox, Jelene and Legge, 1993: 72). This is why the analysis of group-related attitudes is of central importance in understanding politics, as religious groups help citizens make political choices, particularly on specific policies and on the candidates to be elected. In other words, religious groups strongly influence both their members’ political behaviour and the electoral results, as well as the reactions and strategies developed by political parties to gain or maintain their power (Ibid.). Moreover, the study of ‘polarized group affect’ contributes to explain how an ‘enemy’ is much needed in order to build a well defined group identity.

According to the literature on the theme, it appears that, precisely for this reason, members of minority religions seem to be more committed to the group and more keen to act in its name and defence. This datum finds confirmation in Jelene’s and Wilcox’s (2002) investigation of Catholicism. As they argue, Catholicism is more effective in inculcating values when it is not the mainstream religion: Catholics in non-Catholic countries prove more faithful to conservative values and show a much higher level of church attendance than those living in Catholic countries. The same can be said of minority religions in Catholic countries, which seemingly attract more practising followers than they do in countries where they represent the mainstream religion (Jelene and Wilcox, 2002). In other words, attachment to the group is inversely proportional to the power of that group and a stronger attachment to the group is justified by the struggle on the part of minority

religions to emerge and gain visibility in the public sphere. As a result, 'competition between religious dominations has a positive effect on religious involvement and, conversely, [...] religious monopolies tend to inhibit personal religiosity' (Jelene and Wilcox, 2002: 72) . This is why Catholics in Protestant countries exhibit higher levels of religious observance than where they are the majority, as for instance in Italy. Applying this interpretative model to Italy would also imply an acknowledgment of the deeper internal cohesion and orthodoxy of minority religions such as Islam. The relationship between religion and the state is also determined by the power of a particular religion: indeed, where it is dominant it will tend to support the state and contribute to reinforcing citizens' trust in the institutions, whereas if it represents a minority competing with more powerful religious antagonists it will show a critical attitude towards the state (Jelene and Wilcox, 2002).

In a similar way, Vallier too analyses the relationship between religious groups and the national state, this time looking at the issue from the opposite perspective and taking as a point of reference governments and democratic institutions. In his perspective, the control the state exerts on religions is inversely proportional to its power: the weaker and more politically unsure of itself a state is, the more 'it will attempt to maximize the scope of political control over ecclesiastic affairs' (Vallier, 1971: 16). Moreover, the greater this political control is, the more the Church will be 'fashioned to serve political ends' and the less the state will prove capable of developing a secular theory of political legitimacy. In this sense, according to Vallier, nations which are closer to Rome and have a clear separation between the state and the Church 'provide the Holy See and its transnational units the greatest possibilities for influence' (Vallier, 1971: 16-18).

This relationship between mainstream religions and nation states began to emerge after World War II following the process of increasing secularisation which saw civil democratic values replace

religious ones. Vallier, as well as other scholars, found that the Church, forced to give up temporal powers and having lost its control on political affairs, re-shaped its own role within national boundaries and in international affairs while gaining more freedom to assert its views on controversial issues and ethical problems. Having realised that the days of political alliances had gone for good, the Church started looking for new allies, which it found in other Christian religions (Vallier, 1971: 18): 'Through this process the Church has moved up in the hierarchy of social control towards a systematic position as a global pastor' (Vallier, 1971: 22-23). In this sense, it managed to reinforce its power rather than surrender to its evident decline while gaining increasingly stronger support from citizens whose trust in the institutions was being weakened by religion itself. Indeed, as Putnam (1993) argues, hierarchical religions, while attracting people's support, damage the development of horizontal ties of solidarity and trust. This theory, aimed at proving 'strong negative association between trust and strong hierarchical religions', particularly fits the case of Catholic countries and Italy above the others (La Porta, Lopes De-Silener, Shleifer and Vishny, 1997: 333-338).

While weakening citizens' trust in national institutions, Catholicism also has the effect of mobilising people at a local level, both in a negative sense, as for instance to show discontent with the institutions, and in a positive sense, building stronger connections within the group and increased commitment to it (Greenberg, 2000: 377-394). At the same time, the Church reinforces its own power at an international level since, as proved by many studies on transnational migration, it represents a point of reference for individuals who relocate themselves in a new country but keep strong connections with their homeland, or at least feel part of both their country of origin and the new place where they work and spend most of their time. Indeed, religious identities and practices also enable migrants to sustain membership in multiple locations. This is made possible not only by the links the Church holds with

its institutions in other countries but also by the similarity of membership required for the two groups, which give migrants a sense of continuity and often represent their only chance of integrating (Levitt, 2003, 847-873).

Voye (1999), Warner (2000), Cochran (1981) and Segers and Jelene (1998) agree on this interpretation of religious groups and particularly Catholicism as experts in practical ethical issues and on their great impact on decision making, especially on the part of weak political actors and governments. With the shift from a codified and institutionalised public morality to a more individualistic attitude according to which choice is relegated to the private sphere, Catholicism, as well as other religions, presents itself as a 'neutral consultant' in the field of ethics in post-modern societies. As a result, in the 1990s, representatives of the Church in Europe started becoming opinion-makers and points of reference for states unable to make decisions on controversial matters (Warner, 2000; Vallier, 1971; Jelene and Segers, 1998). Even more importantly, this shift and re-qualification of religion took place without any intervention or opposition on the part of governments and mass media, which rather portrayed the phenomenon as natural. To achieve this new status the Church had to change substantially: it presented itself as de-dogmatised and was more careful about the language it employed to express ideas and put forward solutions to controversial questions, as for instance referring more often to human rights rather than to the 'laws of God' (Warner, 2000: 278). As a result, contemporary societies have to deal with the paradox of Catholic representatives acting as influential members of consultative committees on ethical dilemmas which are supposed to offer disinterested and neutral opinions on questions of central importance for the Church. Warner warns of the impossibility for the Church to play such a role, since it implies taking a distance from its own set of values and its particular idea of the world. He also calls into question the role of the media, which have failed to denounce, or indeed even to

acknowledge, the existence of such a deep contradiction (Warner, 2000: 278).

The different aspects of the debate on the role of religion in contemporary democratic societies and its relationship with national and international politics summarised in this section provide a general background for a further analysis of the Italian case and particularly of the role of the Catholic Church in the debate on Italianness and immigration. As this chapter will try to prove, if on the one hand the scenario described above seems to apply perfectly to the Italian case, on the other hand Italy can be considered as a special case precisely because of its geographical and historical closeness to the Holy See, a factor that Vallier sees as a cause of high interference on the part of the Church in politics and vice versa (Vallier, 1971). This peculiar relationship between the Vatican and the Italian state is the focus of the following section of this chapter.

3. Universal aspiration and its formal limits: the relationship between State and Church

The adjective Catholic comes from the Greek *katholikos*, which means universal. The Church, by proclaiming itself Catholic, claims a universal power that ‘concerne tutti gli uomini, l’umanità intera’, ‘tutto l’universo’, ‘che è versato in ogni scienza e disciplina; che si allarga a considerare i più svariati rami dello scibile’ (Dizionario Garzanti Linguistica, Universale, 2005). ‘La Chiesa è cattolica in un duplice senso. E’ cattolica perché in essa è presente Cristo. [...] Essa è cattolica perché è inviata in missione da Cristo alla totalità del genere umano: tutti gli uomini sono chiamati a formare il nuovo popolo di Dio. Perciò questo popolo, restando uno e unico, si deve estendere a tutto il mondo e a tutti i secoli, affinché si adempia l’intenzione della volontà di Dio, il quale in principio ha creato la natura umana una, e vuole radunare

insieme infine i suoi figli, che si erano dispersi' (CEI, 2003: III, art. 830, 831). But how can this universal aspiration free from temporal and geographical limitations be reconciled with the autonomy and independence of particular sovereign secular states? Or, in other words, how can a universal Church whose territory is geographically incorporated in a foreign country exert its universal influence? This section will address the special relationship between the Catholic Church and the Italian state in order to provide a political and historical explanation for the recurring interference in the administration of Italian internal affairs, and in this case immigration policies, on the part of the Church.

Before addressing the specific case of the Italian state and its official relationship with the Catholic Church, it is necessary to briefly take into account more generally the connections between secular nation-states and churches operating within the same national boundaries. According to Ferrari, a state needs to possess two characteristics in order to be defined as secular. Firstly, it must guarantee 'individual religious freedom, which means the irrelevance of one's religious convictions with regard to the enjoyment of political and civil rights' and it must prohibit the discrimination of those who have beliefs different from the mainstream one. Secondly, there must be a distinction between state and Church, based on the autonomy of minority religions and the lack of interference on the part of the Church, a reversible principle which also establishes the independence of the state from any form of religion. The latter cannot have any role in legitimising a power which has to be based on citizens' will (Ferrari, 2006: 11). As the scholar states, this independence is today guaranteed to Western democracies despite the fact that in certain countries, such as Britain, Denmark and Norway, political authorities have to profess a certain religion, since state authorities are free to be atheists or followers of minority religions without this implying any 'diminution of their civil and political rights' (Davis, 2000: Ferrari, 2006: 12). Ferrari, referring to Warnink (2001) and

Robbers (2001), explains that the autonomy of the state and the Church in European countries is established with the Constitutional Charters and with the specific agreements or ‘concordats’ stipulated by the representatives of the state and those of recognised religious minorities (Ferrari, 2006: 12):

Within the limits now outlined it is possible to maintain that ‘the secular State’ constitutes a model of organisation of relations between religion and politics that is widely shared in European countries, beyond the legal superstructures still hinging on the existence of concordats, State Churches or dominant religions. Within this picture the presence of Muslim communities constitutes a dual challenge: on the one hand, for the Muslims themselves who have to find a means of integration in a reality (the secular State) that is culturally alien to many of them, and on the other, for the Europeans who have to understand how far the secularity of the State can go in integrating this reality (Ibid.).

Given this premise and leaving momentarily aside the ‘challenge’ of European Muslim integration, which will be addressed later on in this chapter, the specific case of Italy and its peculiar relationship with the Roman Catholic Church can now be addressed, as it emerges from the official agreements signed by representatives of the two institutions.

This peculiar relationship is formally regulated by the Lateran Pacts signed in February 1929 by a representative of the Pope, Cardinal Pietro Gasparri and the then Prime Minister Benito Mussolini. If until then the saying ‘libera Chiesa in libero stato’ (free Church in free state) had vaguely established the duties and the rights of the two powers, the Lateran pacts ratified in detail the separation of and the relation between these two entities. After decades of disputes following the taking of Rome in 1870 and various attempts to resolve the tensions between the Papacy and the

newly born Italian state, such as the Act of Guarantees in 1871 or the pact promoted by Gentiloni in 1913, the Lateran Pacts gave to the Holy See absolute and visible independence, allowing it to become an autonomous territory on which the Pope could exert full sovereignty, which marked the official birth of the Vatican State. Moreover, it confirmed that the Roman Catholic religion was the only official state religion, as already documented in the first article of the Statuto Albertino. The pact also granted the Church some privileges concerning the citizens of the Vatican State, the immovable property of the Holy See and tax exemptions. Finally, it involved a conspicuous assignment of shares ('titoli azionari') as compensation for the annexation of a relevant part of the Holy See's territory by the Italian state. The part of the agreement denominated 'Concordato', which regulated the relation between Church and state, recognised the validity of religious marriages and the power of the Sacra Romana Rota to annul them and granted the teaching of Catholic religion in Italian schools at every level of the educational system (Legge 25 Marzo 1985/121, Modificazioni al Concordato lateranense dell'11 Febbraio 1929 tra la Repubblica Italiana e la Santa Sede).

After the war, following a process promoted by the Democratic Christian party and supported by a Communist Party worried about the possible class and ideological clashes that could further weaken the newly born Italian Republic, the regulations of the Lateran Pacts were included in the Republican Constitution, whose article 7 establishes that 'Lo Stato e la Chiesa Cattolica sono, ciascuno nel proprio ordine, indipendenti e sovrani. I loro rapporti sono regolati dai Patti Lateranensi. Le modificazioni dei Patti accettate dalle due parti non richiedono procedimento di revisione costituzionale' (Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana, 1947). A long process of consultation between the Italian state and the Vatican for a revision of the Lateran Pacts, started in 1969, resulted in 1985 in a new 'Concordato', which on the one hand affirmed the citizens' right to freedom of religion and the independence of the Catholic Church,

and on the other hand abolished the compulsory weekly hour of religion in the school syllabus as well as the state's stipend to the clergy (www.chiesacattolica.it). Moreover, according to the 'Protocollo addizionale', a sort of appendix to the 'Concordato' of 1985, 'Si considera non più in vigore il principio, originariamente richiamato dai Patti Lateranensi, della religione cattolica come sola religione dello Stato italiano'(Law n.121, 25 March 1985). The discussion on a possible further revision of the Lateran Pacts, pushed forward by certain political representatives, is still ongoing today and causing tension between the political system and the CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference), which recently reacted vehemently to what Monsignor Betori calls 'pallottole di carta' (paper bullets) referring to the pressure coming from the press and the government (Anon., 16/11/2005).

This digression on the relationship between the Church and the state was meant to provide a general background to better understand on which basis the Church takes part in public debates, claims for itself special rights and intervenes on political issues. According to Provenza, the Catholic Church has always been involved in politics, as recently proved by the so-called 'vademezum' written in 2003 by the then Cardinal Ratzinger in order to give Italian MPs instructions on which laws and measures discussed by the Parliament were to be considered ethical and which not (Provenza, 2003). If issues such as divorce, abortion, artificial insemination, research on stem cells and euthanasia have always been considered ethical questions and therefore the Church has always taken part in political discussions on them, immigration has recently become an ethical matter too, as it entails a reflection on concepts and values which are crucial for the Church. Moreover, as this chapter will try to prove, the Church has exploited the debate on immigration to give prominence to concepts of identity and otherness, thereby promoting a firm defence of what it calls 'the rights of the individual', including the right not to restrict religious beliefs to the private sphere.

4. From Ratzinger to Biffi: a comparative analysis of the Catholic Church's interventions on identity and immigration.

This section will address the sometimes contradictory interventions on the part of the Catholic Church in the discussion on immigration. When did the Church start considering this issue as relevant and to feel it had a duty to have a say in it? Where does this interest originate from? Or, to put it differently, when did immigration begin to matter to the Church?

The Church's involvement in the debate does not seem to coincide with the wider political awareness of the phenomenon, which can be traced back to the early 1990s, following the fall of the Berlin wall and the war in former Yugoslavia. This is confirmed by the Church's lack of interest in the laws on immigration approved by the Italian parliament before the end of the last century: indeed the so-called 'Bossi-Fini', the law on immigration passed in 2002 and named after the MPs who designed it, was the first measure that members of the Catholic hierarchy discussed, praised and/or blamed. Until then the Church had spoken on matters related to foreign immigrants within the country from a sociological perspective, based on the general assumption derived from its doctrine, that immigrants have to be considered as brothers to be welcomed and supported in the name of an unconditional love and Christian charity. The question is why this shared feeling and official position of the hierarchy towards those traditionally defined by the as 'gli ultimi' changed dramatically at the turn of the new century, when the Church started engaging in the debate on specific laws and measures, becoming one of the stronger voices in the public discussion on the theme.

This section will try to answer these questions through a comparative analysis of the main documents, which represent a sort of turning point in the debate. In looking at the chronology of these

documents, the main characteristic which emerges at a first glance is the fact that the most controversial of them, which had a stronger impact on public opinion, were all written in the few months between June and September 2000. Indeed, Cardinal Ratzinger's 'Nota sulla espressione chiese sorelle' was approved by Pope John Paul II on the 9 June 2000 and published on 30 June 2000. Similarly, another document signed by the now Pope Benedict XVI entitled *Dominus Jesus* was dated August 6th and published on 5 September of the same year. Another crucial document which contributed to open a strong debate on immigration was written the same year and month and sent to parishes on the 13th of August: Cardinal Giacomo Biffi's 'nota pastorale' entitled 'La citta' di San Petronio nel terzo millennio'. These three documents, and particularly the *Dominus Jesus* and Biffi's note, represent a clear turn in the Church's attitude towards immigration, from that general goodwill based on traditional Christian charity towards a much more political and utilitarian attitude, which this work will refer to as 'rational selection' (as opposed to a 'natural selection').

The analysis of these texts will be followed by a brief overview of several interventions and proposals which were put forward by individual parish priests as well as important members of the hierarchy immediately after the initial heated discussion derived from Biffi's intervention. Although the latter can be considered as the cause of the 'scandal', it seems appropriate here to follow the actual chronology in order to address a central question: why were all documents published in 2000? And why one after the other, within a period of three months?

The 'Nota sull'espressione chiese sorelle' written by Ratzinger for the 'Congregazione per la dottrina della fede' had the precise aim of clarifying the meaning of the expression 'sister churches', and to remove the ambiguities of its common usage in official documents. As the Cardinal recalls, the term, originally used in official documents to describe the dialogue between the Catholic

and the Orthodox Churches, had become part of a common language to indicate the relationship between them. Nevertheless, as the Cardinal insists, ‘purtroppo recentemente l’uso di tale espressione è stato esteso in certe pubblicazioni e da alcuni teologi [...] per indicare la Chiesa cattolica da un lato e la Chiesa ortodossa dall’altro, inducendo a pensare che nella realtà non esisterebbe l’unica Chiesa di Cristo, ma essa potrà essere di nuovo ristabilita a seguito della riconciliazione tra le due chiese sorelle’ (Ratzinger, 2000a). Subsequently the term ‘chiese sorelle’ began to be applied also to the Anglican and other non Catholic churches. Therefore, this document, approved by Pope John Paul II on 9 June 2000, meant not only to denounce the use of this expression with a meaning deeply different from its original one, but also to clarify the need for an official intervention to regulate – or, better, ban – this recent use, particularly in official documents.

This apparently purely theological specification can be considered as much more politically significant if linked to the other documents mentioned above, and in this sense can be seen as a first step towards a more articulated strategy in addressing the debate on immigration. This is confirmed by the register of the *Dominus Jesus* and Biffi’s ‘nota pastorale’, which followed after a few months and contributed to reinforce the still veiled message of an intrinsic superiority of the Catholic Church.

The incipit of the *Dominus Jesus*, extracted from Mark’s Gospel, opens with a reminder of the Church’s universal mission of bringing the Gospel to every single human being in the world and of distinguishing between those who will listen to it and those who will not as ‘chi crederà [...] e sarà salvo’ and ‘chi non crederà e sarà condannato’ (16, 15-16). This exquisitely doctrinal statement reveals its political inclination in an attempt to establish which attitude the Church should adopt towards those who do not believe. The Church, Ratzinger writes, looks with sincere respect at those ‘ways to behave and live’, those doctrines that, however different

from the Church's, reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men. Moreover, as the Cardinal states, announcing this truth involves practising an inter-religious dialogue whose aim is to enrich and get to know each participant while responding to the truth and respecting freedom (Ratzinger, 2000b: § 2).

In less than a page, Ratzinger established a double premise: the first one is to define vaguely the other religions as 'stili di vita', in this sense almost referring to them as arbitrary choices among different life styles. The second one consists in defining them as a sort of partial derivation from a superior truth, a ray descending from a single origin and later on simply as 'esigenze culturali contemporanee' (contemporary cultural needs) (Ibid., § 3). According to him, the most appropriate means to deal with these ways of life is through a dialogue considered as the only possible communication in a world threatened by relativistic theories, aimed at justifying religious pluralism not only *de facto* but also *de iure*. In other words, the Cardinal is arguing that if the coexistence of different beliefs in contemporary democracies is undeniable, and therefore should be recognized (*de facto*), however it cannot be explained, even less justified, in its principles (*de iure*) (Ibid., § 4). In order to stem and correct this growing relativism according to which no revelation can be the true one, it is necessary to reassert the definitive and complete character of the Catholic universal revelation (Ibid., §§ 5-6).

Here the Cardinal introduces for the first time that concept of rationality and intelligence which turned out to be so controversial in his Regensburg lecture in December 2006. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that Catholicism allows people to reach the truth through the use of 'coerente intelligenza', whereas 'the other religions consist of a mixture of experience and thought on which men's wisdom is based as they are on a search for truth which has not yet found a clear confirmation. Therefore they can only rely on God's magnanimity in partially revealing himself through a still

confused and erroneous perception' (Ibid., §§ 7-8). In this sense, the uniqueness and unity of the Catholic religion cannot be questioned but only accepted in its evidence (Ibid., paragraph 16). As a consequence, Ratzinger concludes, the Church cannot be considered as the sum of the different churches, nor can the idea of the absence of a unified Church be accepted and compensated by a common search for it (Ibid., §19).

As a result, despite the genuine attitude of the other churches, it is not possible to neglect the fact that their faith comes from various mistakes, if not from superstition, and in this sense they represent an obstacle to salvation (Ibid., § 21). In this respect the dialogue can be seen as an attempt to bring salvation to those who are excluded from it. This dialogue has to be based on an equal dignity of the different interlocutors, even though this equality refers to the individuals, that is to say, the subjects who carry their beliefs, and not to the specific content of those beliefs (*Dominus Jesus*, 2000: § 22). The document's conclusion specifies that only when this unity is complete, can it be affirmed that 'Non siete più stranieri né ospiti, ma siete concittadini dei santi e familiari di Dio' (Ibid., § 23).

I would argue that the choice of terms such as 'foreigner' as opposite to 'citizen' is not a random one but rather expresses a precise political concern on the part of the Church and not only the need for a doctrinal specification. This is confirmed by the speech given by Cardinal Ratzinger on 5 September, the day in which his 'Dominus Jesus' was presented to the press. At the press conference, Ratzinger was even clearer in his reference to such words. First of all, he reminded the audience of how often nowadays people tend to assume that different religions represent diverse ways to salvation: this attitude 'si può definire, senza timore di essere smentiti, relativismo' (Ratzinger, 2000c). According to the Cardinal, relativism, defined as the prevalent attitude in contemporary Western world, is often justified on a

theological basis with the impossibility of receiving a full and clear divine revelation. This relativistic attitude towards the truth becomes therefore a justification for a widespread religious pluralism according to which what is true for an individual could not be true for the others (Ibid.). In this respect, the idea of a universal and binding truth diffused by the Church is often mistaken for a sort of fundamentalism, an attack on the spirit of the modern age and a threat to tolerance and freedom (Ibid.).

Ratzinger laments that the meaning of the term ‘dialogue’ itself is therefore erroneously intended, far from the one established by the II Vatican Council, because it does not represent a mission of conversion, a way to find the truth, but rather it becomes ‘l’essenza del dogma relativista, l’opposto della conversione’ (Ratzinger, 2000c: 1). As the Cardinal argues, according to the dominant relativistic thought, ‘dialogue’ is the attitude of putting different beliefs on the same level, so that everything assumes the same importance and dignity, being at the same time relative. This kind of dialogue is invoked to promote collaboration and integration between different religious positions (Ibid.).

Not only does Ratzinger criticise this attitude for its false premises, but he goes as far as to argue that as long as relativism is seen as a ‘filosofia dell’umanità’ capable of guaranteeing tolerance and democracy for our societies, it will have as its first result that of ‘marginalizzare ulteriormente chi si ostina nella difesa della identità cristiana e nella sua pretesa di diffondere la verità universale’ (Ratzinger, 2000c: 2). As this section will argue later on, this statement represents a fundamental first step towards the strategy that the Church has been developing in order to reassert its own role in the country: a strategy based on the presumption that the Catholic Church has today become a victim, a minority and therefore has to be protected and supported by the state. To make his message even clearer, Ratzinger defines the growing critique of the Catholic Church’s aspiration to an absolute and definitive truth

as ‘un falso concetto di tolleranza’ (Ibid.). Moreover, he claims that the idea of tolerance as an expression of freedom of conscience, thought and religion has indeed been defended and promoted by the II Vatican Council and re-asserted in the *Dominus Jesus*, and has always been a fundamental ethical position in the Christian belief, in this way affirming the Catholic origins of this value. Nonetheless, according to him, this principle of respect for freedom has today been manipulated and extended to the content of what is tolerated, thereby assuming that different religions, lifestyles and views of the world have equal dignity and neglecting the existence of a universal and objective truth. In this respect tolerance means renouncing the truth, which is indeed today perceived as a secondary and irrelevant issue. As a consequence, the Cardinal states, faith and superstition, experience and illusion cannot be differentiated (Ibid.).

Finally, without a search for the truth, the recognition of other religions itself becomes contradictory, as it is not based upon clear criteria of discernment when judging what is positive and what is negative or distinguishing between a superstition and a religion (Ibid.). One might question how such criteria could be formulated, since it seems clear that the Church would wish to promote a particular idea of the truth, which would most probably be seen as unacceptable and arbitrary by those who do not share the same views or faith. Here, Ratzinger does not engage more openly with a definition, which is however already implicit in the document and seemingly based on rationality.

Ratzinger’s speech for the presentation of his *Dominus Jesus* follows the same path of the document itself in its opening with a declaration of respect for different religions, followed by a core of theological and ideological clarifications, which represent the main message and a conclusion which reaffirms the initial reassurance about the Church’s respect and positive disposition towards different beliefs. Nonetheless, just before re-asserting this attitude

towards dialogue at the end of his speech as well as his document, in order to leave the reader with the impression of a constructive process of mutual understanding, Ratzinger shoots his last and most sharpened arrow: ‘Tutto ciò che di vero e buono esiste nelle religioni [...] va riconosciuto e valorizzato. [...] I semi del Logos sono sparsi ovunque. Ma non si possono chiudere gli occhi sugli errori e inganni che sono presenti nelle religioni’ (Ratzinger, Presentazione *Dominus Jesus*, 2000: 2). This is why, he concludes, the Catholic Church’s esteem and respect for other religions cannot lessen the originality and uniqueness of the Christian revelation, and therefore cannot put a stop to the Church’s mission of evangelisation (Ibid.).

The *Dominus Jesus* had been presented as a general theological reflection, addressing both the whole Catholic community and non-Catholics in explaining the Church’s attitude towards the other religions. It was written in a formal technical language which made its polemical and practical implications remain quite implicit. On the contrary, the pastoral note ‘La città di San Petronio nel terzo millennio’ by Cardinal Giacomo Biffi, written on 13 September 2000, a week after the previous document, begins by addressing a limited audience (the people of Bologna and more precisely ‘i credenti’) and a precise issue (the roots of these citizens’ Christian identity) and its polemical intent was quite clear from the beginning.

The document opens with a call to the people of Bologna for a stronger awareness of the privilege of belonging to this city and the sense of pride this belonging requires. In the section entitled ‘Un volto cristiano’, Biffi introduces a long reflection upon the city of Bologna aimed at justifying the pride citizens should feel in considering themselves as part of a town which was born and developed in a culture deeply influenced by Catholicism and shaped by the Church’s enterprise (Biffi, 2000: § 7). Then he embarks on a sort of review of all the historical sites and

monuments of Bologna, which represent a symbol and a product of this Catholic culture: the shrine of the Madonna di San Luca, the Church of San Petronio, icon of unity of aims and values as opposed to the towers as symbols of conflict and civil wars, the cathedral, Santo Stefano, and even the arcades, typical of Bologna's architecture (Ibid.: §§ 9-17). This overview of places linked to Catholicism ends with an 'osservazione conclusiva' on what Biffi calls the historical truth that unfortunately the new generations are forced to ignore, which is that in the whole peninsula and not only in this city the public works that represent Italy in the world were commissioned by the Church and still today represent Italians' adhesion to traditional Christian values (Ibid.: § 18).

Characteristic traits of Bologna, according to Biffi, are also love for science, intellectual curiosity and a determination to fight ignorance and backwardness. Moreover, the people of Bologna are also well known for their ability to investigate things in depth in order to identify the 'final aim' that grants life a precise meaning (Ibid.: § 25). The city, the Cardinal states, is renowned for its renewed faith in God which represents the source of beauty, brotherhood and health in the region, and which takes a concrete form in the many institutions in support of the poor or the marginalised (Ibid.: § 33).

Despite this glorious past and world fame, however, Biffi also pauses to reflect on the 'innegabile calo di tensione' - intended as spiritual and ethical relaxation - occurring not only in Bologna but in the rest of the world as well (Biffi, 2000: § 24). The city, he states, seems to have lost its traditional attachment to those ancient values on which its civilisation was built, an issue which leads to the need for identifying what he calls 'le difficili sfide del nostro tempo'. To these challenges the city should react without panic or alarmism, but rather by asking itself how to preserve its own identity (Ibid.: § 36). But what are the challenges Biffi is referring

to? The Cardinal specifies that two main causes can be identified in order to explain the moral decadence of our societies: ‘Le sfide che già ci sovrastano sono principalmente due: il crescente afflusso di genti che vengono a noi da paesi lontani e diversi: il diffondersi di una cultura non cristiana tra le popolazioni cristiane’. (Ibid.: § 36). The last statement opens the way to a section of the pastoral note entitled ‘La questione dell’immigrazione’ which can be considered almost as a separate document for two reasons: first because its register is very different from the rest and secondly because it can be considered as the main source for the discussion on immigration on a more practical level on the part of the Church. I will therefore examine this section of the pastoral note in some detail.

In the first paragraph (‘Una sorpresa’) Biffi states that first of all it is necessary to acknowledge that the massive arrival of immigrants in the country has been a surprise for ‘all of us’, where ‘us’ means both the Church and the state. According to him, the latter seems lost and unable to deal with the situation rationally; nonetheless the Church too has been caught unprepared and despite its efforts to alleviate the discomfort and privations of the newly arrived, it has not proved until now capable of developing a common practical and less abstract position on the matter. Indeed, the generic solidarity and the importance of evangelical charity - despite their being both legitimate principles and a duty for the Church - have proved more well-meaning than useful since acting in their name does not deal with the real complexity of the problem (Biffi, 2000: § 37). Nevertheless, the Cardinal argues that solving social issues such as that of immigration is not a duty of the Catholic Church, whose members should not feel guilty for not having the strength to deal with them and to put forward practical solutions. Charging the Church with such a responsibility and expecting it to confront these ‘problems’ would be a sign of an intolerable ‘integralism’, since its mission rather is that of spreading the Gospel and following ‘il comando dell’amore’. This

mission can be accompanied by but not replaced with charitable action (Ibid.).

According to Biffi, the Christian duty of proselytism implies as a pre-condition an attitude of an open and sincere dialogue, even though it can never be limited to such a dialogue. The one outlined by the Cardinal is a dialogue which can be supported by an objective knowledge of different positions and views but which can be considered as fulfilled only when it has managed to bring the knowledge of Christ to ‘quei nostri fratelli, che sventuratamente ancora non ne sono beneficiati’ (Biffi, 2000: §§ 38-40). From Biffi’s perspective, the fact that this evangelical mission does not tolerate any deliberate exclusion of addressees and has therefore to be universal, is something which should never be neglected. Catholics are called to provide an answer to this ‘indeclinabile responsabilità che essi hanno nei confronti di tutti i nuovi arrivati’ (Muslims included), a responsibility alleviated by their awareness of possessing a truth which is ‘assolutamente inconfutabile con i pur preziosi barlumi offerti dalle varie religioni e dall’Islam’ (Biffi, 2000: § 40). Moreover, Biffi remarks upon the duty already discussed in the *Dominus Jesus*, of behaving towards immigrants with Christian charity, which means helping them to reach the knowledge of the truth according to their concrete possibilities (Biffi, 2000: § 41).

Having established these general premises based on Christian values and duties and an explicit call for a differentiation in the state’s and the Church’s respective responsibility in relation to immigration, in the section entitled ‘Un approccio realistico’ Biffi seemingly leaves to one side the theoretical aspect of the issue and begins to address it at a more practical level. This paragraph opens with the consideration that in dealing with the variegated phenomenon of immigration, Christian communities cannot avoid considering and judging differently specific individuals and groups

in order to realistically react to them in the most appropriate way (Biffi, 2000: § 42).

At this point the Cardinal engages in a more detailed analysis of the different cases, starting with Catholic immigrants: they – regardless of the language they speak and the colour of their skin – have to be treated in a way that makes them feel that ‘all’interni della Chiesa non ci sono stranieri’, they have to be welcomed and considered as brothers, part of the same family. Moreover, when they are part of a large group they should be encouraged to preserve their particular Catholic tradition, which will be regarded with ‘affettuosa attenzione’ (Ibid).

Biffi goes as far as to set out a sort of regulatory plan on practical issues in order to clear the way of possible misunderstandings and avoid contradictory responses on the part of the Church. In particular, he clarifies, the members of the ancient Oriental Church will have to be considered with respect and, despite their not yet complete harmony with the Roman Catholic Church, should occasionally be allowed to use Catholic churches to celebrate their rites. Nonetheless, the attitude towards non Christians, who have to be ‘amati e, per quanto è possibile aiutati nelle loro necessità’, has to follow what had been established by the Nota CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference) in 1993, which is that in order to avoid a dangerous confusion, they cannot be granted the use of churches, or places commonly used for activities connected to the Catholic cult. (Biffi, 2000: § 42; CEI, 1993)

The next section of the pastoral note, entitled ‘Considerazione generale’, is the most specific and detailed one, since it addresses ‘il comportamento auspicabile dello stato’ and of its representatives towards immigration. It contains the most unequivocal statement on the – according to the Cardinal – most adequate means to deal with the issue, which later on became the focus of a heated debate and which today represents one of the very few seemingly rational criteria set out in order to answer the questions posed by the arrival

of immigrants in the country. Here Biffi states: 'I criteri per ammettere gli immigrati non possono essere solamente economici e previdenziali. [...] Occorre che ci si preoccupi seriamente di salvare l'identità della nazione', since Italy is not an uninhabited deserted land with no history and living traditions, or cultural and spiritual features, to be populated indiscriminately as if it had not a patrimony of civilisation which needs to be saved (Biffi, 2000: § 43). In Biffi's view, in order to build a peaceful coexistence, if not a desirable integration, the state must take into account that the immigrants' conditions at the start of the process are not equally favourable: in other words they are not equal, which is a fact that the representatives of Italian institutions should never neglect (Ibid.). Moreover, the document explains, the newly arrived should be urged to learn better the traditions and identity of the 'peculiare umanità' they want to integrate in (Ibid.).

Paragraph 44 addresses specific themes in even more detail and can be seen as the most controversial in the whole document. Here indeed Biffi embarks on an analysis of the case of Muslim immigrants, arguing that: 'il caso dei musulmani va trattato con una particolare attenzione. Essi hanno una forma di alimentazione diversa. [...] un diverso giorno festivo, un diritto alla famiglia incompatibile col nostro, una concezione della donna lontanissima dalla nostra (fino ad ammettere e a praticare la poligamia). Soprattutto hanno una visione rigorosamente integralista della vita pubblica, sicché la perfetta immedesimazione tra religione e politica fa parte della loro fede [...] anche se di solito a farla valere aspettano prudentemente di diventare preponderanti'. To conclude, the Cardinal states, the role of the Church is that of evangelising whereas it is the state - every modern Western state - which has to develop a political strategy to manage the phenomenon (Biffi, 2000: § 44).

Before bringing the focus back to the city of Bologna, Biffi concludes this more polemical part of the document with a short

section concerning Catholicism as the historical national religion to remind his addressees that, even though Catholicism is no longer the official state religion, it is nevertheless the historic religion of the Italian nation as well as the source of its identity and past greatness. Therefore, according to him, it is absolutely inadequate to compare it to other religions or cultural views. Moreover, he argues that a democracy which grants minorities a respect which damages the majority or does not imply an equal respect for what represents a tradition, is a very peculiar democracy. He goes further to mention as an example of 'intolleranza sostanziale' the case of those schools where the crucifixes have been removed following the request of students and families who have faiths different from the Catholic one (Biffi, 2000: § 45).

Biffi then briefly mentions the other challenges typical of contemporary societies: immigration in fact is not the only issue they have to deal with. First in his list comes the spreading of a culture that even though not hostile to Catholicism does not take it into account and does not refer to it in establishing its principles: this is the case of the prevailing scientific thought orientated towards functional aims rather than concerned with a search for the truth. At the same time, according to him, the growing globalisation at a social and economic level is destined to produce a state of deep alienation, while the developing sector of media and communication grants space and visibility to a culture based on superficial perceptions that pay scarce attention to individuals, their historic memory and their capacity to invest in long term projects.

The degeneration of our society, mirrored for instance by the difficulties faced by institutions such as the family, can be ascribed to a state of 'libertà senza verità', that is to say, freedom not linked to and not based on values, which damages above all the dignity of human beings. Nevertheless, Biffi specifies that not everything linked with modernity has to be considered as evil: in his view it is necessary to distinguish what can be accepted and what must not.

The criterion for this distinction should never be political as politics aims to find a compromise and stipulate agreements but should rather be based on faithfulness towards an immutable truth and ‘la nostra identità di credenti’ (Biffi, 2000: §§ 47-48).

Biffi’s main point, briefly mentioned earlier on in his pastoral note, becomes clear at this point when he states that Italian contemporary society seems to be led by mere ‘opinions’, often antagonistic to the Catholic view of the good life, since it looks upon Catholicism with hatred. What the archbishop finds surprising in this scenario is the fact that the Church’s representatives do not seem to be concerned, or even aware, of this process. When the Cardinal anticipates the outcome of this trend in the relatively short term, he seems quite convinced that ‘L’Europa o ridiventerà cristiana o diventerà musulmana’: no matter what direction it is going to take, the ‘cultura del niente’ – Biffi never calls it relativism as Ratzinger does – has no chance to prevail. Indeed, a culture indifferent to values will not resist the ideological assault of Islam: the latter can only be defeated by a return to ‘the origins’ and therefore necessarily to traditional Christian foundations (Biffi, 2000: § 52). Despite the general rhetoric of disengagement used by the Catholic hierarchy to remark upon the need to distinguish between the role of the state and that of the Church in dealing with immigration, Biffi does put forward practical solutions that the Italian state should enforce to deal with this phenomenon, as for example the idea that the state should give preference to Catholic immigrants, who are easier to assimilate.

Before taking into account the reactions to these documents on the part of other members of the Church as well as of representatives of other religions, this section will analyse the similarities and differences between Ratzinger’s *Dominus Jesus* and Biffi’s pastoral note as well as the points they each try to make. As stated earlier on, Ratzinger’s and Biffi’s positions on the foreign presence in the country are not the first interventions on the matter

of immigration coming from the Church. Indeed, several pastoral notes had already been written in the past, such as ‘Stranieri dal terzo mondo. I nuovi poveri tra noi e il nostro impegno’ (CEI, 1982); ‘Uomini di culture diverse; dal conflitto alla solidarietà’ (CEI, 1990); ‘Ero forestiero e mi avete ospitato’ in 1993 and ‘Nella Chiesa nessuno è straniero’ (CEI, 2000). Nevertheless, these previous documents only remarked upon the traditional concept of Christian charity, and looked at the issue from a general doctrinal point of view according to which immigrants had to be considered as the new poor, whom the Church and Catholic individuals had the duty to love, welcome and when possible support. In this respect, it also has to be said that the pastoral notes mentioned above expressed the position of CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference), a position which represents the more welcoming face of the Catholic hierarchy, as it will be remarked later on in this chapter.

Ratzinger’s *Dominus Jesus* and Biffi’s ‘La città di San Petronio nel terzo millennio’, represent a turning point in the message of the Church since, despite the fact that the idea of Christian love still represents a point of reference in the Church’s attitude towards immigrants, this attitude is clearly informed with an intrinsic superiority of Catholicism which makes Ratzinger state that Catholics cannot even be tempted by Islam (Ratzinger, 2000a). Moreover, for the first time the Church not only comments upon this supposed superiority but goes so far as to put forward practical solutions to these ‘difficili sfide del nostro tempo’ (Biffi, 2000), questioning among other things the role that the state should play in dealing with the issue.

Although written in different styles and aiming to achieve different objectives, the core of ideas expressed in the *Dominus Jesus* and Biffi’s pastoral note overlap and often coincide. They both consider different religions as ‘ways of life’ resulting from empirical experience and erroneous thoughts, whereas Catholicism is seen as the only religion capable of reaching the truth through a

rational process, using intelligence rather than superstition or common sense. Regarding the criteria the two representatives of the Church consider adequate to judge other beliefs, Ratzinger advocates that only the principle of truth – rationality – represents a means to defeat contemporary relativism, while Biffi, even though agreeing on the principle of truth, focuses more on a practical/utilitarian criterion to regulate relations with people who have different ideas of the good life: the common characteristic which can promote and facilitate integration on the part of immigrants and the pre-requisite to welcome them can only be Catholicism. The choice of Catholicism as the only solution to matters related to immigration is based on a common syllogism which both Ratzinger and Biffi construct which has as its premise the fact that ‘every man provided with logic and rationality sees the truth and therefore is Catholic’ and ends with the seemingly logical conclusion that ‘every Italian is Catholic’. In Biffi’s case the privileged treatment accorded to Catholic immigrants not only follows the principle of truth but is also based on the practical distinction between peoples who are easy to assimilate and others who are judged to be impossible to assimilate, as for instance Muslims.

Both Ratzinger and Biffi consider relativism as a sort of false tolerance, since they believe that tolerance coming from passive acceptance of different ideas of the good life is based on a fundamental mistake: the idea that different views have the same dignity and therefore nothing is absolute, as well as the fact that tolerance is extended not only to the individuals who hold a particular belief but also the content of that belief, whereas the only tolerance which remains faithful to the principle of truth is a tolerance towards individuals.

Finally, they both agree that the Church has the right to accomplish its mission which consists in proselytism: only after a sincere conversion is it possible to become a member of the Church and – this is a recurrent message in the Cardinals’ documents –

‘within the Church nobody is a foreigner’. Recognising the superiority of Catholicism and becoming part of the Church seems to be the only way immigrants can shift from being ‘others’, foreigners, to becoming citizens, part of the Catholic family. The concept of the Catholic family, interestingly enough, seems to coincide with that of the nation since not being a foreigner and therefore being Italian coincides with being Catholic, following a transitive property of the above mentioned syllogism which ‘proves’ that every Italian is Catholic and is aimed at granting Italian citizenship to every Catholic.

On 18 April 2005, during the *Missa pro eligendo Romano Pontefice*, the then Cardinal Ratzinger advocated that a clear and strong faith and an open belonging to the Catholic Church are today seen as a sign of fundamentalism, whereas a spreading relativism seems to be judged as the only adequate attitude in this era in which people let themselves easily shift from one doctrine to another as the wind changes. This ironical statement already contains implicitly the claim for a stronger freedom of expression on the part of the Catholic Church, which implies a critique of the concept of political correctness, particularly when referring to the Muslim community (De Magistris, 2005).

5. The first reactions to Biffi’s pastoral note

On 6 September 2000, a day after Ratzinger’s press conference on the *Dominus Jesus*, and a week before the release of Biffi’s pastoral note, a letter by Don Gianni Baget Bozzo to Northern League’s leader Umberto Bossi was published in the League’s newspaper *La Padania*. Although it could be seen as a personal request to Bossi, the letter is central to the discussion on Islam as it indirectly asks to make the ‘natural’ alliance between the Church and the Northern League more institutionalised. Indeed, Baget Bozzo starts by reminding Bossi of the role the League plays in defending Italian traditional identity, which is nowadays threatened by Islam.

According to him, the threat is due to the fact that Islam is supported in our societies by political actors who, despite having diverse aims, see it as a minor evil. The reference is both to non-Catholics who consider Islam almost as a symbol of secularism (probably because of its fight against traditional Catholic symbols such as the crucifix) and to Catholics themselves who seem to give up their religion for a new faith, which consists in an unconditioned love for the others (Baget Bozzo, 2000). These two perspectives are, according to him, vitiated by the same mistake: they consider individual Muslims rather than focus on their beliefs, which – Baget Bozzo claims – constitutes the real problem. In the concluding part of his letter, he addresses the Catholic representatives for their misinterpretation of Christian charity, the only consequence of which will consist, in his view, in a growing power of Islam within Western countries. This, he insists, is a scenario made plausible if not very probable by the Church itself and its choice to grant Muslims places for their ‘cult’ without realising that ‘every place given to them becomes a territory of Islam’: a situation which will inevitably cause a deep incurable fracture in Italian society (Ibid.).

Despite being similar in tone and content, Baget Bozzo’s letter to Bossi cannot be seen as a reaction to Biffi’s pastoral note which was presented to the press a week later. Nevertheless, this intervention can be considered as part of that movement, internal to the Catholic Church, which has identified immigration as the cause of the decline Italian society is supposedly going through. This movement produced not only isolated official documents but a lively debate which was mirrored in interviews, sermons and seminars such as the one organised by pro-immigrant association ‘Migrantes’ on 30 September 2000, whose main speaker was Cardinal Biffi, determined, once again, to remark upon the ideas already expressed in his pastoral note.

Interestingly, however, the first reaction to the *Dominus Jesus* and to ‘La città di San Petronio nel terzo millennio’ did not come from the Church: neither Pope John Paul II nor other members of the Catholic hierarchy intervened either to criticise or praise them, at least not until a more immediate reaction came from the press and from the representatives of other religions. Both documents would probably have remained part of an internal discussion if Italian newspapers, included Catholic ones, had not reported extensively on them. The general impression in analysing these articles is a lack of moderate stances, as all interventions, both in favour and against Biffi, seem quite radical. Questioned by journalists immediately after Biffi’s press conference, most of the Church’s representatives seemed to strongly support the Cardinal. Monsignor Alfredo Maria Garsia, head of the CEI commission for immigration, praised the rational criteria elaborated by Biffi to allow immigrants into the country. A similar position was adopted by Don Oreste Benzi, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, secretary of the Vatican State, and Monsignor Francesco Gioia, secretary for the ‘pastoral for migrants and itinerant people’. The latter, quoting from the 1998 pastoral note ‘La Chiesa di fronte al razzismo. Per una società più fraterna’ (CEI, 1989), focused on the need for social justice which is today threatened by certain minorities’ attempts to impose their idea of the good life on a weaker majority (Anon., 2000a).

If these first interventions were aimed at supporting Biffi’s document without entering into the details of its contents, a more theoretical debate started in the pages of the magazine *L’Espresso* on 28 September and developed until the first week of October. Throughout this period, the main newspapers addressed the contents of Biffi’s note and its ideological orientation while the Pope, without commenting on Biffi’s ideas, gave a series of speeches aimed at promoting the dialogue between different cultures, and Prodi took part in the opening of a new Sikh temple near Reggio Emilia.

Giovanni Sartori, political scientist, writer and columnist for *Corriere della Sera*, opened the debate from the pages of *L'Espresso*. In his articles, Sartori explained that his first reaction, when interviewed immediately after Biffi's press conference, was to take a distance from the Cardinal's words. Nonetheless, having read the whole document, the author reconsidered his own position while reflecting on how 'una fede intelligente sia vicina e conciliabile con la intelligenza della ragione' (Sartori, 28/09/2000). Despite their different preoccupations and priorities – the good religion for Biffi and the good society for Sartori – the latter agrees with the Cardinal's views that the state cannot distinguish between immigrants to welcome and immigrants to reject using criteria exclusively based on economic convenience or welfare requirements. Moreover, he agrees with the idea that the main problem with immigration is the presence of Muslims among the new arrivals. With specific reference to centre-left minister Livia Turco's negative reaction to Biffi's list of irreconcilable differences between 'us' and 'them', and her call for the need to remember not only what divides but also what unifies people with different beliefs, Sartori reminded Turco that the word 'Islam' means subjection and that the Arabic word for freedom – 'homayai' – only expresses a condition of non-slavery. According to him, Biffi's depiction of a future scenario in which Islam will prevail is correct (Sartori, 2000). Finally, Sartori concluded that Biffi was one of the few who followed an ethic of responsibility, a morality which takes into account the consequences of our choices, whereas many, the Pope among the others, base their judgements on an ethic of principles according to which what really counts is the intention, and unexpected or negative results can be ignored (Ibid.).

On 1 October, Stefano Andini, in his article *for L'Avvenire*, argued that Biffi's intervention unveiled worries and thoughts which were already implicit and shared by political parties as well as common citizens and that the Cardinal managed to raise his voice against a spreading hypocrisy. According to him, Biffi was

not stepping back from the Church's traditional message of Christian charity but was simply addressing a real situation. It was not by chance, he stated, that this position was shared by intellectuals such as Sartori himself, Ernesto Galli della Loggia and Giuliano Ferrara who had never been particularly close to the official position of the Church. Moreover, he believed that the Muslim community was protesting against this document not because it was concerned about its members' integration into Italian society but rather because it could represent an obstacle to its claim for more privileges, which it was at that time discussing with the government (Andini, 2000).

During the first days of October two articles signed by Leonardo Zega and Jenner Meletti, published in the mainstream newspapers *La Stampa* and *La Repubblica* respectively, focused on the impossibility of obtaining the views of any representative of the Church on 'La città di San Petronio nel terzo millennio'. After the first public reaction immediately after the press conference, the Catholic hierarchy seemingly stepped back and refused to comment on the polemics and debate raised by the document, insisting that it represented an internal discussion. However, they seemed to generally support their 'colleague' Biffi, often inviting the journalists to read the document with more attention in order to realise that it represented a message of love rather than hatred towards 'the other' (Zega, 2000; Meletti, 2000).

While very few Cardinals, bishops and parish priests, as reported by Zega and Meletti, accepted to be interviewed on the subject and none of them accepted any of the many invitations to participate in TV programmes during the days following Biffi's press conference, John Paul II decided to speak. This decision was interesting as it came when the discussion was still very heated, which is what led many to think he wanted to give his followers a clear direction. However, on 1 October, during the Sunday Angelus, the Pope talked about Ratzinger's *Dominus Jesus* rather

than Biffi's pastoral note, despite the fact that the controversy of those days was mainly about Biffi's view, the *Dominus Jesus* being simply seen as a starting point for a theological legitimization of the Church's new rhetoric on immigration. Contrary to expectations, the Pope never mentioned the Cardinal's pastoral note: instead, he tried to explain the real meaning of Ratzinger's thought. Considering Catholicism as the only religion able to reach the truth as superior to all other creeds, he stated, does not imply an arrogant and discriminatory attitude towards different faiths, towards which the Church maintains the respect and love that have always been fundamental in its doctrine. Moreover, the Pope remarked upon the importance of keeping the dialogue with the others as open and sincere as it had been during the few days in September when representatives of different churches and states met in Lisbon with the aim of promoting an inter-religious dialogue (Anon., 2000h; 'Anon., 2000a).

The day after Biffi's press conference on his pastoral note, *La Padania* published an unsigned article on the document, which summarised the Cardinal's thought. It focused on the need for the state to deal with the situation without attributing an inadequate responsibility to the Church, as well as on the Church's right to distinguish between its doctrine, which was based on the already mentioned Christian love for the other, and the issues linked to social justice that had to be dealt with by the government. *La Padania* insisted on defending Biffi's statement that: 'alla fine vogliamo avere il coraggio di dire che gli unici che non hanno la libertà culturale sono i cattolici' (Anon., 2000f). This polemical statement, which was later on remarked upon by other members of the Catholic hierarchy, represents a key concept in the debate on immigration and a clear demand on the part of the Church for more space in the public sphere, typical of minorities who react to past discriminations.

Even though the first reactions of other Church members to Ratzinger's and Biffi's documents tended to be in favour of the opinions they expressed, these positions did not represent the Church as a whole. It rather seems that, even though most of the higher members of the Catholic hierarchy supported the Cardinals, nevertheless many priests who worked with Catholic associations were critical of these interventions. However, the reaction of these associations was not immediate, probably because they were not stimulated to speak up by the media, which were more interested in the authoritative views of important members of the Catholic hierarchy. An exception in this case is represented by Don Vitaliano Della Sala, a young priest in the parish of Sant' Angelo della Scala, close to the social centres and the Seattle anti-global movement, who denounced Biffi for incitement to racial hatred. According to Della Sala, Biffi's statements resulted from a deep ignorance of immigrants' conditions of life in Italy, as well as on a need to build or preserve a particular identity on the basis of a constant struggle against an enemy, which in the past was Communism and today was represented by immigration and particularly Muslim immigration. According to the priest, the Church's opinion on issues relating to both legal and illegal immigrants was quite homogeneous and his voice represented a rupture and relatively isolated position in the Catholic mainstream position (Anon., 2000b).

Della Sala's reaction was the strongest, even when compared to that of representatives of other religions such as the Waldensian theologian Paolo Ricca and the leaders of the Muslim community of Bologna Altounji M. Radwan and Daniele Parracino. Ricca had intervened on Ratzinger's 'Nota pastorale sull'espressione chiese sorelle' the day after it was released, but did not comment on Biffi's document which was published a week later, nor did he express his opinion later on, when the discussion became of central interest in the media. This quiet reaction can be plausibly explained with the fact that immigration was not the main concern of the

Waldensian community, since most of its members are Italian, and therefore did not perceive themselves as the target of the document. In his response to Ratzinger's note as well as to the *Dominus Jesus*, Ricca defined the latter as in open contradiction with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council which, according to him, Rome seemed to have forgotten. Moreover, he embarked on a critique of the doctrinal contents of the document and claimed the right to define the Waldensian community as a Church, basing this right on a brief analysis of the Gospel (Ricca, 2000).

More concerned with the issue of immigration was the declaration of Pallavicini, leader of the CO.RE.IS (Italian Muslim Community), who remarked upon the dialogue developed with Italian institutions and firmly hoped that documents such as those published in September with their insistence on the superiority of Catholicism and the danger of immigration would not interfere with the ongoing process of mutual understanding between the Italian state and the CO.RE.IS. Despite the quiet tone of his reply and his intention to keep the dialogue open, Pallavicini underlined the confusion and contradiction in Biffi's use of terms such as Muslim and immigrants which were not necessarily synonymous. This was evident in his own case, since he was the first Italian Muslim citizen. Moreover, the CO.RE.IS claimed that the Church's current attitude towards other religions was in open and clear contradiction with the message in favour of a dialogue given by Pope John Paul II in 1986 during the inter-religious meeting in Assisi (CO.RE.IS, 2000).

In a similar fashion, the Muslim community of the city of Bologna called for a stop to all the controversies which, as they stated, they themselves were not interested in fomenting. Rather, they took their chance to thank Romano Prodi and Livia Turco for their support for the Muslim cause (Anon., 2000c; Anon., 2000d). Indeed, Prodi and Turco were among the few politicians who, immediately after the publication of Biffi's pastoral note,

intervened to reassert the laity of the state as a fundamental trait of contemporary democracies in general and of Italy in particular. Romano Prodi intervened in the debate the day after Biffi had criticised, among other things, those Catholics who held positions of leadership in the country. The Cardinal had attacked them for their lack of commitment in supporting their Church and their attitude in ignoring what, in his view, was happening in Italy, which he summed up as 'è impossibile praticare il cristianesimo in Italia' (Ibid.).

Prodi never mentioned the Cardinal directly while taking part in a ceremony for the opening of a Sikh temple in Novellara, not far from Bologna, on the 1st of October 2000. Rather, he referred to Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, whose position on immigration was diametrically opposed to Biffi's. Indeed Prodi, quoting Martini, remarked upon the importance of values such as difference, coexistence and pluralism and stated that 'una società che non sia pluralistica e multietnica [...] è destinata a chiudersi' (Anon., 2000e). Moreover, Prodi stated that in Europe all citizens have the same rights, regardless of their condition of immigrants, as long as they respect the law: thus Italy could be the home of everyone who worked for a 'harmonic coexistence', as Martini defined it. The opening of the Sikh temple – with the participation of a representative of the Muslim community, Professor Mahmoud Salem Elsheilch - had also been an occasion to talk about the law on freedom of religion presented by Prodi on 3 July 1997 and under the Parliament's scrutiny in those days.

After this first outburst, the Catholic representatives waited for the situation to calm down before intervening again. It is interesting to note that the whole discussion started suddenly, developed vehemently with a cross fire of articles, press conferences, counter-reactions and declined quietly all within a period of two weeks, after which things seemed to be back to normal and the 'incident' was forgotten.

The obvious question concerns the reasons why this happened, why all the documents which created the controversy were written in the same month and why after the first reactions aimed at denouncing this ‘clash of civilisations’ the debate faded away. There are two main logical answers to this question. First, the origin of the whole discussion was without doubt Ratzinger’s *Dominus Jesus*, which opened a new era for the Church, as it became less concerned with ‘political correctness’ and more determined to raise its voice, a determination probably facilitated by the spreading awareness of a progressive decline of Catholicism, as openly recognized by both Ratzinger and Biffi. Moreover, Ratzinger’s point of view, which has always been decisive for the Church’s official positions on certain issues, started to emerge more openly despite being seemingly far from the Pope’s perspective on the same themes. I argue that what made it possible for Ratzinger to speak the way he did about the superiority of the Catholic Church was precisely his awareness of the role of John Paul II as the paladin of dialogue between different religions. The idea of brotherhood promoted by the Pope through inter-religious meetings and marches, and his interpretation of difference as enriching and, not least, his personality and attitude towards his followers made it easier for Ratzinger to use a different tone. This chapter argues that it is precisely because of this more open attitude towards immigration that Ratzinger could take a different role in the debate. It also has to be said that the Church had always relied on Ratzinger’s knowledge and theological rigour in the redefinition of the Catholic doctrine and its adjustment to different historical and political times. In a certain sense, the Cardinal’s cold and rational approach was moderated by the Pope’s personal charisma. It could be said that Ratzinger’s intervention gave an indication of how the Church’s positions on certain issues would have been much more radical if he had been the Pope, as confirmed after his ascension to the Papal throne.

A second hypothesis to explain why the debate exploded so suddenly in the autumn of 2000, and as rapidly faded a few months later, can be linked to the fact that 2000 was the Jubilee year, and therefore an important occasion for the Church to celebrate Catholicism and somehow re-launch it. As proven by the documents previously analysed, the Catholic hierarchy seemed aware of a progressive ‘calo di tensione’, as Biffi defined it, meaning a decline, at least in terms of active participation of the followers. The Jubilee could then represent, or had to represent, a chance to remind Italians of their Catholic origins and their natural and traditional belonging to Christianity. This call for a return to tradition was based on different strategies. As mentioned above, if Wojtyła’s role as Pope was that of the father (or the grand father as he had been defined during the various World Youth Days), Ratzinger had the more difficult role of the theologian, whose duty was that of clearing away theoretical misunderstanding and clarifying the implications of the dogma, regardless of the consequence this activity could bring. Ratzinger’s speech can be seen as part of this strategy, which often seems to be based on a constant warning of the danger represented by the other. In this sense, as the rebel parish priest who spoke against Biffi argued, the Church always had to define itself against an enemy, previously Communism and today immigration.

To conclude, it has to be said that, despite the clear turn in the Church’s rhetoric on otherness, and despite the lack of open criticism of Biffi’s pastoral note and Ratzinger’s *Dominus Jesus*, a brief overview of the post-2000 interventions on immigration on the part of the Church shows that both Pope John Paul II and the CEI have maintained their traditional attitude of openness towards the newly arrived. In November 2004 indeed, bishop Lino Bortolo Belotti, president of the ‘Commissione Episcopale per le migrazioni’, authored the official message for the 91st ‘Giornata Mondiale per le migrazioni’, entitled ‘Il mondo come casa: dalla diffidenza all’accoglienza’. The document established for the first

time the link between Italian emigration since 1914 and the arrival of ‘migliaia di uomini, donne, bambini pronti ad affrontare viaggi costosi e pericolosi per raggiungere il “sognato paradiso terrestre” delle terre europee’ (CEI, 2004: 1). Citing the gospel, it remarked upon the need to look at the immigrant ‘con benevolenza, con simpatia, come vicino, come persona umana quindi portatrice di valori e ricchezze, non come straniero, non come potenziale nemico, come sembra guardarlo la legge, o come incomodo da allontanare, ma come membro di un’unica grande famiglia i cui legami sono destinati a essere sempre più stretti e costruttivi’ (Ibid.). Leaving aside for a moment the criticism directed at the laws on immigration, what is interesting in this document is that it seemed to focus on specific categories of immigrants, among them those of Rom and Sinti, ‘spesso oggetto di scherno’. However, it referred exclusively to those immigrants who are only temporarily present in the territory as, for instance, ‘fieranti e circensi’, or ‘gli addetti alle navi da trasporto o da crociera’. In this sense, despite the welcoming spirit behind the document, grouping the Rom and the Sinti with other groups characterised by a nomadic lifestyle seems quite a superficial generalisation, since the presence of Rom and Sinti communities in Italy dates back as far as the XIII century and many of their members are Italian citizens, and therefore they cannot be compared to temporary migrants. Moreover, if Rom and Sinti have often been at the centre of heated debates on ‘the other’, this has not been the case for the other categories taken into account by the CEI. Grouping together these very different categories of migrants under the label of ‘temporary’ has the only effect of promoting tolerance for those who are simply passing through the country, who incidentally are far less discriminated against than those who decided to set permanently in Italy. As the next chapter will show, the immigrants who are looked at with suspicion and who are marginalised more within the Italian society are those perceived as a threat precisely because of their intention to settle in the country for good. This mechanism of temporary

sympathy or tolerance for passer-by immigrants has proved quite dangerous, as for instance in the case of Albanians, welcomed at their arrival and discriminated against once it became clear that they intended to stay and start a new life in Italy, as Chapter V will highlight. In this sense, even if the document signed by Belotti explicitly encouraged Italians to welcome these immigrants and therefore implicitly distanced itself from positions such as those expressed by Biffi and Ratzinger, somehow it plays with a fake problem, and therefore can be considered as more welcoming only in its intentions and its general rhetoric. Moreover, even if it seemed to protect Rom and Sinti, it actually does not do them a favour as it presents them as temporary and therefore to be temporarily welcomed rather than methodically integrated. In this sense, these immigrants have to be loved and treated according to Christian charity in everyday life but no debate is opened on their long-term presence and need/right to integrate. However, it is important to anticipate that the CEI did stand against active discrimination when the Bossi-Fini and the ‘security package’ laws were passed in 2002 and 2008 respectively, as will be explained in Chapter IV.

The case of Pope John Paul II is quite different and provides an example of that welcoming rhetoric based on the importance of the dialogue, which allowed Ratzinger to assume a more radical position, as mentioned earlier. John Paul II intervened officially on the theme of immigration in 2004, with a message written for the ‘Giornata Mondiale del Migrante Rifugiato’. The document focuses on the integration of the newly arrived intended not as an assimilation which neglects the specific cultural identity of the immigrants, nor as a marginalisation which could lead to a situation of apartheid. According to Pope John Paul II integration is ‘una maggiore conoscenza di ciascuno. E’ un processo prolungato che mira a formare società e culture [...] Il migrante, in tale processo, è impegnato a compiere i passi necessari all’inclusione sociale, quali l’apprendimento della lingua nazionale e il proprio adeguamento

alle leggi e alle esigenze del lavoro, così da evitare il crearsi di una differenza esasperata' (John Paul II, 2004). The document also remarks upon the conflicts created by the coexistence of different identities, which can only be resolved by finding the 'giusto equilibrio tra il rispetto dell'identità propria e il riconoscimento di quella altrui'. The solution put forward by the old Pope was that of promoting an open dialogue 'fra uomini di culture diverse in un contesto di pluralismo che vada oltre la semplice tolleranza e giunga alla simpatia'. Finally, the Pope agreed with Ratzinger's belief that 'Se coerenti con se stessi i Cristiani non possono poi rinunciare a predicare il Vangelo di Cristo ad ogni creatura (cfr Mc15,15). Lo devono fare, ovviamente, nel rispetto della coscienza altrui' (John Paul II, 2004).

To a certain extent, it can be said that the new position of the Church on the issue of immigration, marked by Ratzinger's *Dominus Jesus* and Biffi's pastoral note set an important precedent and contributed to legitimising an exclusionary rhetoric later exploited by Right-wing political parties such as the Northern League. However, it is not possible to consider the Church as a united front lined against immigration. Solidarity and openness towards the immigrants have been occasionally expressed by institutions such as the CEI and by the Pope himself even after 2000, regardless of the fact that they were overshadowed in the debate by the more radical anti-immigrants interventions.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of the interventions on the part of the Catholic hierarchy in the debate on immigration shows a new trend in the Church's attitude towards the newly arrived. For decades and until 2000 the Church's reaction towards immigrants had always been inspired by Christian charity according to which others had to be loved, welcomed and possibly helped in their needs, an official position noted in the documents and pastoral notes on immigration written until the end of the 1990s. Ratzinger's *Dominus Jesus* and Biffi's pastoral note represent a dramatic turn in the Church's rhetoric on identity and immigration. Through the account of the transformation undertaken by mainstream religions since the late 1980s, this chapter has tried to frame this new attitude within the struggle of churches seeking to overcome an acknowledged decline and (re)gain power. In the case of the Italian Catholic Church, the first step in this new strategy was to claim for recognition of Catholicism as superior to other beliefs, which are defined as mere 'ways of life' based on empirical experience or even worse simply on superstition. The documents analysed argue that every human being provided with rationality necessarily has to be Catholic. Despite the fact that the syllogism is based on a non-demonstrable and non self-evident premise, the final equation identifies all Italians with Catholics. The battle fought by the Church becomes then a battle which has to be supported by the whole nation, since, according to Cardinal Biffi and Cardinal Ratzinger, it is not only the Church but Italian identity as well which is threatened.

Both Ratzinger and Biffi argue that the only duty of the Church is evangelisation: this process of enlightenment, they claim, is made today particularly difficult, if not impossible, by the 'false tolerance' typical of our societies. The idea that different interpretations of the good life can be attributed equal value results in an aggressive attitude on the part of non-Catholic individuals and groups towards the Church. Hence the latter is portrayed as a

victim and the only subject to whom the right of freedom of speech is denied or whose freedom of expression is defined by others as integralist and intolerant. Having re-defined itself against the other, the Muslim enemy, and its role as a victim, the Church appropriates the strategy typical of traditional minorities, which consists in a dual demand to the state for a positive freedom (being given more space in the public sphere) and a negative one (denying other groups the same right). According to the literature on identity and otherness, minorities claim protection from the state in the name of past discriminations. The Church, in a diametrically opposite way, carries on these requests in the name of its glorious role in the past of the country. At a time when it seems to be struggling against an openly recognised decline in popularity, Islam is invoked to gain visibility and confirm a privileged role within the country.

Despite the fact that the Church's main interest is not the arrival of foreigners with different cultures and religions, its contribution to the debate on immigration is of central importance. In filling the gaps left in the public discussion by the lack of participation of Italian intellectuals and by the still confused position of the political class, the Church emerged as a leading voice on the theme, as can be proved by the analysis of its interventions particularly during the autumn of 2000, year of the Jubilee. In this sense, it followed a mechanism which, in the last three decades, all mainstream religious groups in Europe and in the USA have followed, namely presenting themselves as 'global pastors', neutral state consultants on ethical matters, which now also include immigration. In order to acquire this new role and start a dialogue with the government, the Catholic Church has developed new communication strategies, based on a language and rhetoric which privilege terms linked with human rights rather than the gospel.

As this chapter tried to prove, despite its acknowledgement of the need to distinguish between the responsibilities of the state and its own, the Church also put forward practical solutions to deal with

the situation, proving very influential in the state's decision-making in matters related to immigration, particularly since Ratzinger's ascent to the Papal Throne. Even though controversial, 'rational selection' based on Catholicism as a guarantee for a smoother assimilation promoted by Biffi represents one of the few clear and coherent criteria set until now.

While enabling a rhetoric of disengagement, the Church seemingly aims at replacing the state by granting immigrants citizenship, following a principle of 'selective solidarity' according to which all immigrants have to be loved but only those who are ready to abandon their own religious identity to embrace Catholicism can become Italian. More than a call for integration, this solution seems to be a call for the need to assimilate different cultures and religions and to reduce them to a state where religion and nationality coincide. Such a system could only work in a theocratic state, where the Church would have the power to allocate rights such as that of citizenship and whose realisation probably represents what the Church aspires to in the future. This theocratic state, where being Catholic would coincide with being Italian and vice versa, would not be much different from what the Catholic hierarchy defines as the integralist Muslim idea of the identification of religion and state.

Finally, as Chapter III will argue, the Church's strategy is very similar to that of the Northern League, which probably represents the only other strong voice in the contemporary debate, even though following different premises and aiming at different results. As a consequence, the Church's response to immigration, based on a recurrent use of terms such as foreigner and citizen, Catholic and Italian, Muslim and immigrant as well as its constructed dual role as victim but also as a point of reference for the country, contributed to increase public anxiety and shared concerns. As explained earlier, the Italian Catholic Church had also the advantage of being close to Rome, a position that, as argued by

Vallier, made it easier and almost natural to 'serve political ends'. In this sense, its rhetoric of identity and immigration, supported by other political actors, indirectly provided the state with widespread support for its restrictive policies, as will be analysed in the next chapter.

Chapter III

The Northern League and the debate on identity and immigration.

‘La Lega, alla radice delle sue origini, è anzitutto una condizione dell’anima’

(Francesco Valsecchi, *Alle radici di una protesta*, 1997)

1. Introduction

The rise to power of the ‘leghe autonomiste’ and particularly that of the Northern League can be seen as the most relevant change in the political scenario of post-war Italy. Since the early 1990s, the leagues have marked a season of new political and electoral trends within Italian society. Their success can be attributed mainly to their ability to interpret, from a new perspective, political issues based on the traditional conflicts within the country: from the North/South divide, to the public versus private debate, to the lack of communication between civil society and political parties (Diamanti, 1993: VII).

Since its advent on the national political scene, countless definitions of the Northern League have been formulated in an attempt to explain its origins as well as the conditions which made possible its progressive and often unexpected rise to power. From a condition of the soul, to an expression of thoughts already discussed in every Northern family before the League’s advent, to a movement of rupture, to an anti-party protest, the League and the many leagues incorporated into it, with their contradictions and changes of strategy, have been investigated in depth by scholars such as Biorcio, Diamanti, Moiolo, Cartocci, Rusconi, Cento Bull and others.

This work does not intend to engage with the now extensive literature on the several factors which brought the League to national attention, its origins and electoral growth nor does it aim to investigate its ideology in exhaustive terms. It will only mention the conditions under which the party was created, the implications of its growing electoral success and its main interests in order to provide a general background for the analysis of a specific issue deriving from its position on identity: that of immigration. The investigation of the League's perspective on immigration and (sub)national identity requires an analysis of the central values on which these positions are based, and of the rhetoric used to put these views forward in the national debate. To a certain extent, this chapter will mirror the structure of the previous one. It will start with a brief account of the origins and rise to power of autonomist leagues in the 1980s and their merging into a unitary party a decade later. It will then investigate the shifts in aims and strategy of the Northern League, particularly since the invention of Padania, and its influence in the ongoing process of identity building in the Northern regions of the country. While leaving aside a more detailed analysis of the League's electoral results and its transformations, the chapter will summarise the different definitions of the party provided by scholars, focusing particularly on the theoretical and pragmatic reasons for its distinctive attitude to immigration. It will also ask whether this attitude has changed since the advent to power of the League as well as the reasons behind this hypothetical shift.

In order to provide a clear picture of how the phenomenon of immigration is perceived by the party's leader and its followers, the chapter will take as a case study the interviews, editorials and letters which have appeared in the Northern League's official website, which are for the most part extracted from articles published in the party's daily newspaper *La Padania* in the last few years. It will then introduce its ambiguous relationship with the Church, arguing that both pay a particular attention to certain key

concepts such as freedom of speech, solidarity, multiculturalism, integration and traditional identities. They also share an original rhetoric based in both cases on the critique of what they perceive as the supposed hypocrisy resulting from political correctness. Despite what this chapter will define as a conflictual and often opportunistic relationship, and despite a radical difference in their declared aims, these two political actors, albeit moved by diverse concerns, contribute to push the government's reactions towards immigration in the same direction, as this analysis will attempt to prove.

This investigation shows how, despite the *leghisti*'s constant reassurance that they are not racist and that they support values such as solidarity, the message their interventions conveys seems to go in the opposite direction. It appears that the League influenced, if not inspired, the government's restrictive policies towards immigration and even more that it created a public which, moved by irrational fears, demands such measures. Finally and most importantly, this work intends to frame the attitude of the Northern League to immigration into a theoretical model, which will be referred to as an 'institutionalised state of exception'. My interpretation will stress the immigrant's resignation to a status of 'permanent transitoriness' and a role as 'homo sacer' as the only condition for being at least temporarily tolerated (integration is not even contemplated) following a process of 'intermittent conditioned selection' on which s/he has no control.

2. Ethnic identities in the era of globalisation

At the time of its first appearance on the national political scene, in the late 1980s, the Northern League was seen by opinion makers and political opponents as a marginal movement with scarce influence on the electorate and was often neglected if not ridiculed as a folkloristic manifestation of local demands and mostly irrelevant for the majority of the country. When, in the early 1990s, it became clear that the new party was gaining visibility and had the power and the popular support to influence Italian political life, many scholars, such as Biorcio, Diamanti and Cartocci, started warning the political class of the danger of underestimating this ambitious and unconventional new political contender.

In his *La Lega. Geografia, storia e sociologia di un nuovo soggetto politico* (1993), Diamanti, a pioneer in this field, stated that the topic of the rise to power of the Northern League was still relatively obscure. Moreover, he argued, the attitude of other parties' representatives and of opinion makers who often underestimated the role of this 'movimento di rottura' did not contribute to opening a debate on a phenomenon that many had defined as absolutely unique (Diamanti, 1993). Not only Diamanti, but scholars such as Tambini and Cachafeiro as well remarked upon the need to consider the Northern League as a complex and nuanced political phenomenon in terms of origins, electoral growth and aims. According to them, an accurate analysis of the party had to start from the acknowledgment of the fact that Umberto Bossi's League is not a single-aim party but is rather characterised by multiple objectives which keep changing and developing constantly (Diamanti, 1993; Tambini, 2001; Cachafeiro, 2002).

As Giovanni De Luna recalls, the Liga Veneta, commonly defined as 'the mother of all leagues', took its first steps at the end of the 1970s, a time which was characterised by the decline of those social movements that, a decade earlier, had contributed to promoting the values of community, solidarity and civil

consciousness. New claims started emerging from the ashes of that 'grande utopia egualitaria', which had marked a period of commitment towards communitarian shared ideals (De Luna, 1994: 24). This decline opened a new season of less ideologically oriented claims, which had their roots in individualistic and mainly material interests. In post-industrial Italy, the fragmentation and decentralisation of the main industries had brought about a shift from a unitary representation of workers, for instance in opposition to factory owners, towards a more pluralistic scenario in which 'l'unicità viene sostituita dalla pluralità, la concentrazione dalla disseminazione' (De Luna, 1994: 24). The crisis faced by industrial committees, workers' associations, women and proletarian movements marked the end of the traditional opposition between genders as well as between work and capital, which had provided until then a clear means of representation and had contributed to shaping recognisable and socially accepted – albeit antagonistic – identities. Social conflicts stopped becoming politicised, while politics began to aim at finding legitimation in itself and its mechanisms. According to De Luna, this passage from solidarity to selfishness can only be explained by referring to the categories of 'victory' and 'defeat', since the movements emerging in the 1980s would not have had a chance to prevail without sweeping away those which had preceded them. It was in these circumstances that the fluxes of communication were interrupted, ideas started losing fluidity and became stiff and entrapped in fixed schemes leaving space for the widespread distrust and selfishness which became 'a common practise' in the 1980s and particularly after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 which officially marked the decline of Communism and one of its main agents in Europe: the Italian Communist Party (PCI) (De Luna, 1994: 25).

De Luna focuses on the crisis of Italian post-industrial society and the decline of the Communist Party in the late 1980s in order to explain the loss of identification with a community and/or a social class and the fracture between the social and political spheres,

while other authors also look at the other Italian popular-party – the DC (Democrazia Cristiana) the Italian Christian Democratic Party - in order to explain the origins of this new era of selfishness and individualism. Cachafeiro, Diamanti and Cartocci consider the role that the DC played in the crumbling of the Italian party system, and the subsequent loss of identity and feeling of bewilderment on the part of citizens, a factor that acquires a particular relevance in the light of the fact that the Northern League has proved more successful in those regions where the ‘white subculture’ was traditionally stronger (Cachafeiro, 1994; Diamanti, 1993; Cartocci, 1994). As Cartocci argues, even though the level of trust in traditional mass parties in Italy seemed to stay stable during the 1980s, this was quite a fragile equilibrium based on the attitude of voters to grant parties a ‘voto di appartenenza’, that is to say, a vote motivated by the belonging to a well defined group and adherence to specific values traditionally promoted by a party characterised by a strong ideology. This type of vote was destined to be replaced by the so-called ‘voto di scambio’, an instrumental and volatile vote granted to a party on the basis of possible advantages deriving from it (Cartocci, 1994: 91), whereas a vote based on a free choice on the part of citizens fully informed on the different options and free from ideological prejudices represents a ‘voto di opinione’ (Parisi and Pasquino, 1977: 215-239). The final blow to the already troubled Italian party system arrived in 1992 with the ‘mani pulite’ police investigation into parties’ corruption, which, as already mentioned in this chapter, resulted in the disappearance of mainstream political parties and in the end of the First Republic.

The 1980s were characterised by radical protest by the core regions of Northern Italy demanding to be recognised as ‘different’ and ‘special’ on the basis of their ethnic specificity, a request which left scholars ‘puzzled’ (Cachafeiro, 2002: 45). Indeed, as Cachafeiro explains, there is academic agreement on two facts: that the North cannot be considered as ethnically homogeneous, and that a protest such as that which took place in those years did not

come from peripheral areas of the country as might have been expected, but from the more economically advanced regions of Piedmont, Veneto and Lombardy (Ibid: 46).

As Romanelli explains, since the 1960s the rapid economic growth and the extent of state intervention in social matters put the need to organise more functional local governments at the centre of public discussion, a debate which led to the creation of ‘ordinary regions’ (Romanelli, 1995). Putnam (1993), Cachafeiro (1994) and Kitschelt and McGann (1995) agree in identifying the creation of partially independent local governments as the reason for the protest of Northern regions seeking recognition as special. In the 1980s, this claim did in fact come from the so-called ‘ordinary regions’ despite their internal lack of ethnic and cultural difference (Cachafeiro, 2002: 45).

If this request left sociologists and political experts ‘puzzled’, as Cachafeiro put it, they considered even less understandable the fact that these claims were justified on the basis of specific ethnic identities and linguistic minorities. The only linguistic minorities in Italy are represented by the German-speaking population of South-Tyrol, the French-speaking inhabitants of Valle D’Aosta and the Slavic minority groups who live close to the border with ex-Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the protection of a linguistic idiom supposedly shared by most regions in the North of the country, seemingly represented the main concern of these new movements whose ideology combined Ethnism and ‘Thirdworldism’, defined as ‘political discourse of internal colonialism in European states’ (Cachafeiro, 2002: 46). Since the late 1970s, this rhetoric of internal colonialism and Thirdworldism, based on the concepts of oppression and victimhood exploited by the League, had become a common means to put forward claims of independence and self-determination in many other European countries, following the process of de-colonisation of the 1960s (Ibid: 58).

Even though the creation of ‘ordinary regions’ is clearly not the only or indeed the main reason behind the birth of these movements, it nevertheless contributed to put the stress on the importance of territory as a means to gain recognition and show antagonism and disillusionment towards the political system. According to Diamanti, the concept of territory as a source of identity is indeed of central importance in providing an explanation for a new type of local identity based upon specific interests within a local economic and social context. Moreover, it also contributes to the shaping of an ‘anti-identity’, as it allows members to distinguish between them and the other, the enemy: in the case of Italy, this dichotomy historically applied to the North-South divide and to the difficult relationship between the centre and the periphery. In this respect nationalism, federalism, regionalism and other theoretical models to define identity come precisely from these diverse interpretations of the idea of territory (Diamanti, 1993: 14). Diamanti also explained how the Northern League had been able to manipulate the ambiguity of the idea of territory in order to achieve its own goals. In his view, the party managed to translate all its claims into territorial issues, from fiscal federalism, to the opposition to traditional political parties, from the call for protection of a linguistic/cultural minority to the anti-immigrants rhetoric (Ibid.: 6).

Moreover, the League became visible at a time which saw in all European countries the passage from traditional to modern societies, a process characterised by two main trends: secularisation and globalisation. As Cento Bull explains, this shift was often connoted by the tension between a set of dichotomies representing old and new values and ways of interpreting life. The first antagonistic attitudes she identifies are those of ‘individualism’ as opposed to ‘localism’: in this sense the local dimension of life and the close ties with the family work as a ‘filter’ through which external ‘modernising’ cultural and social influences are mitigated and even neutralised’ (Cento Bull, 2000: 11). Moreover, the new

political and social climate in some Northern provinces of the country also contributed to creating a new model of associationism, characterised by horizontal connections established through rational choice rather than resulting from ascriptive characteristics. Secularisation played a central role in this tense process of modernisation since religious values usually linked to conservative, non-liberal attitudes started being challenged by secularist values typical of modern societies, characterised by those individualist attitudes held responsible for instance for the demise of the DC. According to Cento Bull, while in Europe ‘administratively unitary states [...] developed class-based cleavages in the course of the industrialisation process, but also shed locally – and regionally – based subcultures, in Italy the traditional sub-culture weakened but did not disappear in the post-war period (Cento Bull, 2000:12). If the voting behaviour in traditional societies was determined by the orientation of family and friends and bounded to loyalty towards a precise set of values and a well defined sense of belonging, in modern societies the vote is supposedly freed from these constrictions, becomes individualistic and based on rational choice. Finally, in modern societies voting behaviour is also supposedly not influenced by the different territorial and/or class political subcultures (Cento Bull, 2000:13). However, the non-linear pattern of modernisation in the areas previously dominated by the white subculture can also explain the rise to power of a new type of territorial party following the demise of Christian Democracy.

3. From local movement to national party: a brief account of the League's rise to power

While most scholars start their investigations into 'leghismo' from the first electoral successes of the Northern League in the early 1990s, others and particularly Cachafeiro and Diamanti include in their accounts different local protest movements, which were born at least a decade before Bossi's League, in order to show where the latter originates from as well as which elements of its predecessors it dropped and which ones it retained (Cachafeiro, 2000; Diamanti, 1993). The rise to power of the political actor that established itself as the third national political party in the 2008 elections (Battaglia, 2008) has its roots in the many leagues and movements which started claiming recognition by and independence from the Italian state in the 1970s. Back in those days, many much more fragmented and less structured leagues voiced local protests in 'peripheral' areas of Northern Italy. Ethno-territorial political claims started emerging from the contradiction represented by the core regions' resentment towards the state due to their perceived economic marginalisation. Ethnicity, even invented, became then a 'principle of legitimacy for the acquisition of rights in the Italian state' (Cachafeiro, 2002:47).

This new trend in Italian politics arose from a European ethnic wave of political mobilisation which took off in the late 1960s and kept growing in the following decade, creating a 'category of practice' – namely that of self-determination based on ethnic difference – which provided European sub-regions with a relevant criterion to put forward claims of 'speciality' (Cachafeiro, 2002: 47). Born already as a movement in the 1950s, ethnoism grew increasingly popular in the 1960s and 1970s, which saw a renewed interest in national minorities and the creation of institutions such as CIEMEN (Centro Internazionale Escarrè per la Minoranze Etniche e Nazionali), aimed at granting representation to those

groups that perceived themselves as ‘colonised’ by the nation states emerging from World War II.

Piedmont had already expressed its autonomist claims in 1952 with the creation of the *Movimento Autonomista Regione Piemonte* (Cachafeiro, 2002: 49). More organisations were to follow soon, even though they only established themselves as political actors relevant at a national level about two decades later. Particularly, ‘the mother of all leagues’, as Liga Veneta’s leader Franco Rocchetta defined it, represents the precursor of this new trend in Italian regional politics as it was the first one to organise itself in a movement in the 1970s, and later on in a party, and to give the general dissatisfaction of Northern industrial areas a more structured form. As Cachafeiro explains, in the 1980s in the region of Veneto economic transformation took place in parallel with a profound change in politics as well. After two decades of industrial growth which had reshaped the urban landscape of the area, the region became a highly productive zone strongly oriented towards a new economy based on exports, at the same time as the crisis experienced by traditional mass parties in the area started becoming increasingly more evident. Veneto had in particular always been a stronghold of the Christian Democratic Party and, consequently, of the Catholic Church and its subculture (Cachafeiro, 2002: 58). Not only did the Venetian leaders of the DC lose their privileged roles within the party at a national level (Pansa, 1986) but the growing process of secularisation of Italian society also contributed to the erosion of loyalty towards the old party and to the rise to power of the Liga Veneta, officially born in 1980 (Diamanti, 1993). At the same time, the spontaneous movements of protest in Piedmont started converging into a more structured organisation claiming recognition of ethnic difference. The *Movimento Autonomista Rinascita Piemonteisa* (later *Union Piemonteisa*) was born in 1980 under the leadership of Roberto Gremmo. In Lombardy the protest underwent the same process and *Lega Autonomista Lombarda*, destined to rise to the national political scene under the leadership

of Umberto Bossi, was officially launched in 1980-1 (Cachafeiro, 2002: 64).

Moving from the chronology of the development of the leagues to the analysis of the geography of the vote, scholars from Cartocci (1994) to Diamanti (1993), from Cento Bull and Gilbert (2001) to Cachafeiro (2002) seem to agree on the fact that the Northern League has proved more successful in achieving electoral consensus in the industrial districts of those Northern regions, whose economy is based on family-run factories and small industries and where the DC had traditionally been the most powerful party in terms of support and identification. In his analysis of voting patterns in Northern provinces, Diamanti identified three main areas of influence: the first coincides with the provinces of Piedmont, such as Turin, Vercelli and Cuneo; the second one is represented by the core of Veneto and included Vicenza, Treviso and Verona, while the third area covers Northern Lombardy with the cities of Bergamo, Varese and Como (Diamanti, 1993: 30). Considering these areas, the sphere of influence of the leagues included the whole of the Northern regions, with the exception of the cities of Milan and Pavia, where its presence was not yet relevant. (Ibid.).

An analysis of the electoral trends shows a certain continuity and internal consistency to the extent that the leagues' uniform presence in these territories resulted in the creation of a new sub-culture comparable to the red/communist one and the white/Christian Democratic one which were prevalent until the late 1980s. The League succeeded in creating a strong feeling of belonging shared by a considerable number of citizens within the boundaries of the regions mentioned above. Moreover, this new sub-culture seemed not only to replace the white one but to show a high degree of continuity with it, a fact confirmed by the increasing electoral decline of the DC in the areas of growth of the Northern League (Diamanti, 1993: 35).

4. A racist party?

Until today there have been many attempts to define the Northern League and to channel its claims, contradictions, changes of strategy and shifts in priorities into a coherent interpretation. If scholars such as Cachafeiro and Diamanti identified ethno-regionalism and nationalism as the most appropriate framework to understand the early days of the movement, others such as Biorcio (1997) and Diani (1996) focused more on the anti-system instances of what they saw primarily as a populist party. Besides the various definitions, Bossi's party has generally been labelled as racist by political opponents and opinion makers: whether interpreted according to the theoretical frameworks of populism or ethno-regionalism or nationalism, all these definitions have generally been associated with a fundamental xenophobic attitude. The recurrent use of a provocative and not at all politically correct language, described by Roberto Iacopini and Stefania Bianchi in their *La Lega ce l'ha crudo* (1994), contributed to spreading the idea that being 'leghista' involved, among other things, a refusal of 'the other'. This meant Southerners in the first instance and then foreign immigrants but also gays, drug addicts, and all subjects generically described as 'weak' members of society.

Three of the characteristics attributed to the party are particularly relevant for the analysis of the League's position on the issues of identity and otherness. The first one is the concept of territory and its role in creating what De Winter and Tursan (1998) call 'an exclusive group identity', albeit an invented one (Cento Bull and Gilbert, 2001: 56). The second one is the category of nationalism applied to the League by scholars such as Tambini (2001) and Melucci (1985) and, particularly, nationalism intended as a political strategy, a way of doing politics rather than an analytic concept or, in other words, an inauthentic posture functional to the achievement of specific goals (Breuilly, 1992; Brubaker, 1992).

Both interpretations can prove useful to understand the role and authenticity of the party's discourse on immigration vis-à-vis identity, and the shift in the definition of the latter during the last decade, as the section on the editorials from *La Padania* will show.

Moreover, even though establishing whether the League can be defined as racist is not the aim of this investigation, it becomes relevant when we try to understand what role this intolerance plays in the construction of a specific model to deal with immigration. In other words, the League's controversial statements and restrictive measures put forward to deal with the phenomenon will be taken into account to establish whether they contribute to the creation of a particular model or idea of the state, peculiar to the Northern League, and how this hypothetical idea might respond to the foreign presence within the country. The following examples of unconventional or politically incorrect interventions, often perceived as racist, can provide the first elements to unveil the League's sometimes implicit definition of identity as it emerges from its opposition to the otherness personified by immigrants.

It is possible to describe the linguistic code used by 'leghisti' as layered like an onion, with the more institutionalised and politically correct statements and speeches given in official circumstances working as a superior layer which envelops a core of progressively stronger messages. Many examples of the latter have been collected by journalist Gian Antonio Stella in his *Dio Po – Gli uomini che fecero la Padania* (1996), a collection of interviews and interventions on the part of members and MPs in which they manifested an open intolerance towards 'ethnicities' or 'races' grouped together as different from the 'Padana'.

The leghisti's main object of denigration has traditionally been those whom they define as 'terroni', a term derived from the word 'terra' – soil – invented to describe in pejorative terms those employed in agriculture, and generically referred to Southerners. In this sense, the term 'terrone' works as a synonym for being lazy,

backward, dirty, Mafioso and ignorant. In fact it sums up all the characteristics which have in time come to be associated with the concept of 'Southernness'. From the slogan 'Ammazza i terroni, risparmia milioni' used in a meeting in Chioggia on 15 September 1996 to recurrent statements such as Giuseppe Babbini's 'Il Nord ha solo un problema: i terroni', the League has always identified non-Northerners as 'a problem' if not as 'a plague' for 'our society', the latter referring to the North, to what is often called 'casa nostra' (Stella, 1996: 2; 34). A reason for the resentment of the people of the North towards Southerners is the privileges they are supposedly granted by the state and by their 'massive' presence in public administration. In this sense, the protest arises from the perception of a double difference: a cultural/ethnic incompatibility and a difference in attitude on the part of the state towards Southerners and Northerners, based on the supposed systematic discrimination against Northerners in the distribution of resources.

The words of Gipo Farassino exemplify Northerners' attitude towards non-Padani: 'Siamo colonizzati. Vivo a Torino e non posso parlare torinese in un negozio perchè il bottegaio è meridionale, in un ufficio perchè l'impiegato è meridionale... Ti dicono: per favore parli in italiano [...] Ma non lo vede? Al cinema si parla napoletano, a teatro in napoletano, in tivù napoletano...pensi a Troisi' (Quoted in Stella: 59). Not only is the North perceived as 'invaded' or 'colonised' but Southerners themselves, according to many leghisti, do not recognise themselves as Italians but rather keep as a point of reference their regional origins. Quoting again Gipo Farassino, 'Ha mai sentito un italiano dire 'sono italiano?' No, dicono: sono calabrese, sono siciliano... non siamo fedeli a una nazione ma a una regione [...] Uno stato multi-etnico non può esistere, puoi tenerlo assieme per un pò con la forza delle armi, ma prima o poi c'è la reazione' (Quoted in Stella: 46). What is interesting in this statement is the fact that the impossibility of keeping together without coercion a multiethnic state is referred to as a state in which Southerners represent the 'foreign' component:

a state whose multiethnic component is determined by the presence of fellow Italians classified as non-Padani. As the analysis of more recent debates on multiculturalism will show, Southerners seem to have now been replaced by non-Italian immigrants in this rhetoric against a pluralistic state. This does not mean that Southerners have smoothly managed to integrate into the North of the country, but they are not the main concern of the Northern league today. In this sense, if Southern identity has been essentialised in fixed stereotypes and exploited in order to build an alternative identity and provide Padani with a sense of belonging, after the invention of Padania the League's rhetoric on identity started focusing on the new 'other': the 'extracomunitario'.

As Balbo and Manconi explain in their *Razzismo – Un vocabolario* (1993), the word 'immigrants' stresses the 'otherness' of different people who share a common status characterised by their travelling, their suffering and their memories of the country of origin, which overlooks their internal differences (whether they are men or women, black or Asian, their different traditions, languages and history of their homelands). The term 'extracomunitario', however, which only exists in Italian and does not translate in other languages, put the stress on Europe, on its citizens' shared identity rather than on the people it refers to and aims to describe. In this sense, while still seeing immigrants as being 'extra', external and therefore excluded, it contributes to reinforcing the feeling of belonging to a European identity 'that until not many years ago was completely alien' to those who now exploit it to preserve the status quo of the 'fortezza Europa' (Balbo and Manconi, 1993: 18-19).

The following statements collected by Stella in a series of interviews are examples of the fact that despite not having completely replaced the 'terroni', the 'extracomunitari' have nonetheless become the centre of the League's concern. As the journalist recalls, Northern League MP Mario Borghezio has often stated that immigrants have to be washed, boarded on a military

plane (and not on civil planes as they would rape the hostesses) and sent back to their countries (Stella, 1996: 36). The only contact that the true *leghista* is allowed to have with foreigners and of which he can be proud is seemingly sexual intercourse, often used to prove the lack of racism of any sort among the party members. In this respect, Mario Borghezio proudly recalls episodes of sex tourism involving 'le negre' referred to as 'local product', while embarking on a complicated differentiation between migrant women in Italy ('le bruttone nigeriane che battono qui da noi') and black women abroad. As Stella states, that is quite a contradiction for a man who became notorious for his violent call for the repression of 'costumi corrotti' of the citizens of Turin and of the local prostitutes and for the need to use plastic bullets against black people. Paradoxically, the MP defines himself as non-racist and, on the contrary, as interested in different cultures as supposedly proved by his anti-colonial positions (Stella, 1996: 39). He instead classified as the worst form of racism the employment of black people in the domestic sector on the part of those who publicly speak against immigration (Ibid.: 43). The apparent contradiction in these racist statements is that they are often expressed precisely to reject the charges of racism or to address the same accusation to the Italian state. In this sense, Borghezio's opinion, expressed through the use of anti-colonialist rhetoric, that the true racists are those who employ immigrants or delude them with the perspective of an easier life is shared by many *leghisti* and is recurrent in the speeches of the leader himself. This sense of solidarity and anti-colonialism, which will be analysed in more depth later on in this chapter, clearly does not prevent Bossi from referring to immigrants of African origins as 'bingo bongo' or from suggesting opening fire against immigrants' boats that disembark in Italy. The latter suggestion was followed more recently by Northern League representative Matteo Salvini's idea to segregate immigrants on train coaches different from those reserved to the Italians (Anon., 2009a).

Despite the general acknowledgment of the party's 'institutionalised intolerance', some scholars who analysed the phenomenon Lega in its early days tend to classify it as non racist, or at least as not primarily centred on a xenophobic ideology. In rejecting the idea of the Northern League as a purely racist organisation, authors such as Balbo and Manconi refer to the classical definitions of racism resulting from academic research on the subject. It is now worth looking briefly at this literature on the theme to better understand not only where the idea that the League is or is not racist originates from but also whether any of the attitudes described by scholars in the field emerges in the party anti-immigration rhetoric and actions, which will be taken into account later on when analysing the editorials from *La Padania*. And more importantly, what sort of model the party is constructing in its almost schizophrenic attempt to reconcile a public rejection of the charges of racism, a response to the demand for a new workforce by the Northern economy and its followers' more or less explicit rejection of the 'other'.

5. Beyond traditional racism

Academic investigation of racism has produced a broad literature on a subject which is still under scrutiny and defined as in constant transformation. As Goldberg (1993) stated, any definition of racism has to be based on empirical observation and to result from its diverse manifestations in everyday life and therefore cannot be formulated 'a priori', at a purely theoretical level, as detached from the reality in which it manifests itself. Scholars such as Miles and Brown (2003), while agreeing on the idea of racism as a concept in continuous transformation, are concerned with the fact that a 'Wittgensteinian' argument like the one put forward by Goldberg, needs to be counterbalanced by a political imperative according to which there must be consensus on what racism is in order to define it as politically or morally unacceptable. In the absence of such a clear definition, according to the authors, any opposition to racism becomes meaningless and any analysis of the subject is invalidated. They believe that too broad a definition of the term, as for instance 'everyone is racist', would result in racist attitudes escaping censure as a mere 'product of cultural determinism or an expression of human nature'. On the other hand, they also warn their readers that too narrow a definition of the concept would allow racism to acquire a certain degree of legitimacy, as in the case of 'racial hierarchy' theories that have been used by nation states to label their ideologies as nationalist rather than racist since the 1950s (Miles and Brown, 2003: 3)

If there seems to be consensus among scholars on the idea that racism is not a static phenomenon, as for instance illustrated in the writings of Wetherell and Potter (1992), the same thing cannot be said on the use of the term 'race'. The concept is considered by Banton (1996) as necessary today in order to draw the boundary between legal and illegal behaviour and to provide victims with laws aimed at protecting them. In this sense the concept of racial groups is the price to be paid for a law against indirect

discrimination (Miles and Brown, 2003: 4; Banton, 1996). Moreover, Banton stresses the importance of 'racialised consciousness' among oppressed groups who find their own identity by virtue of being socially discriminated for their 'inferior' race; in this respect, they use the term race as a symbol of their status, their suffering and their history, as shown by pre-colonial African or modern Afro-American history (Banton, 1996).

Other scholars, such as Gilroy, believe in the importance of taking a distance from the idea that the use of these invented races is necessary in order to achieve justice (Gilroy, 2000: 52). As Balbo and Manconi recall, since 1951 Unesco has been arguing the case for abolishing the term 'race' and replacing it with 'ethnic group'. Nonetheless, the authors believe that the idea of racism is clearly already quite ambiguous and difficult to define, and that therefore the concept has to be explored and constantly redefined in order to prevent its opposite – anti-racism – from becoming equally meaningless and unclear. In other words, they argue that only by reaching consensus on what racism is and by acknowledging its presence in our societies is it possible to react to it in a strong way, a position similar to that held by Banton. If we cannot talk about 'invented races' which do not exist, then it becomes impossible to react to the attitude classified as 'racism'. Racist attitudes can only be firmly opposed if recognised as a fundamental problem, a clear enemy easily identifiable (Balbo and Manconi, 1993: 10). Balbo and Manconi believe that the problem that European countries are facing in their attempt to fight racism originates from an erroneous interpretation of the phenomenon. Particularly, they blame the media for a distorted representation of the issue: according to them, the question to be asked is not whether an individual, a group or a place, are racist, as the answer to these questions can only be positive if the individual, the group, the citizens of a specific place openly declare their racism with a verbal statement or with an active oppression or segregation of those they consider as 'inferior' (Ibid.: 10). Moreover, they insist on the risk implicit in using the

‘classic’ conception of racism in order to establish who falls into the category of racist. Indeed, not only can there be racism even in the absence of openly racist claims, but also the idea of a racism based on the biological and physical superiority of a group does not represent the main trend in contemporary societies, where racism manifests itself in different, more subtle and more ambiguous ways. In other words, Balbo and Manconi are tackling the issue of a grey zone in which racism originates and grows without being recognised as such. As this chapter will try to show, this is precisely the case of the Northern League. Even though its ideology seems not to be centred on biological difference, nonetheless it contributes to cultivating a xenophobic attitude, while providing a justification for inner fears linked to ‘the other’ within Italian society (Cento Bull, 2000).

Since the 1990s academics seem to have abandoned the traditional belief typical of the 1930s and 1940s that racism is based on the physical distinctiveness of its victims, as made self-evident by the impossibility, for instance, of distinguishing a Bosnian Muslim from a Bosnian Serb. As Miles and Brown recall, this impossible distinction has not prevented the eruption of one of the ‘worst genocides of the second half of the twentieth century’ in the political and civil sphere (Miles and Brown, 2003: 6).

They explain that investigations of racism have also tried to cover the moral aspect of the issue by trying to answer a fundamental question: why is racism wrong? The studies of Bonnett (2000) and King (2000) among others have attempted to show the dangers implicit in this ideology and its everyday manifestations. Taguieff (1995) polemically dismisses the moral distinction between good and evil as closer to the category used by medieval Christian theology than to scientific discourse in order to stress the importance of analysing the issue at a political level rather than in its moral implications. Many scholars agree with Taguieff that the political issues linked with racism are much more relevant in our

societies than a moral judgement on it, and state that what really matters is its effect on contemporary societies and the possible (political) answers to deal with it. This belief comes from the acknowledgment of the fact that, since the 1980s, political parties in many European countries have started to demand legitimisation and public recognition for racist claims not very different from those put forwards by fascist ideologies in the 1930s (Miles and Brown, 2003: 15).

Authors such as Turner et al. have formulated a more political definition of racism, purely based on the distribution of resources and access to basic rights, by stating that the term 'racism' identifies a system of distribution of power according to which certain groups are given access whereas others are systematically excluded from benefiting from it (Turner et al., 1984: 2). Balbo and Manconi list three different types of racism as have been outlined by scholars in the last two decades: 'razzismo addizionale' (additional racism), 'razzismo concorrenziale' (competitive racism) and 'razzismo culturale' (cultural racism). Additional racism results from 'adding' a physical, ethnic or cultural difference to a factor of social fears, and is linked to pre-existing feelings of anxiety due to perceived threats of, for instance, crimes against property or the person, drug dealing, fears of spreading illnesses and viruses and of other behaviour considered 'irregular' or different. Be the threat imaginary or real, the common reaction is always that of finding somebody responsible for it outside the community: the guilt has to be placed onto a subject who can be easily identified as different, following a psychological mechanism which seeks to take immediate distance from the 'deviant behaviour' (Balbo and Manconi, 1993: 62-63). This attempt to 'rationalise' fears and intolerance works according to a standard process: the first step consists in putting an emphasis on the 'criminal act', second comes the description of immigrants' lives as 'miserable' and socially stigmatised and finally the neglect of immigrants' everyday life, which includes their families, their jobs, their social networks. By

simplifying their existence and reducing it to the act perceived as deviant, this mechanism contributes to the creation of stereotypes and to the classification of a specific group as relevant only in terms of public security (Ibid.: 62-66).

The second type of racism is based on the defence of the territory and its resources: it arises from the idea that immigrants represent potential competitors in the allocation of resources such as transport, accommodation, health system and jobs. It is characterised by the battle for 'space', be it a square, a street, a train station, and the fear that allowing different groups to occupy it, even though temporarily, will result in the exclusion of citizens from those areas and will determine a loss of control on the part of the community. The struggle not to lose territory has as its first consequence the creation of 'areas of segregation', ghettos where the weakest groups contend with each other for 'lo spazio vinto ai locali' (Ibid.: 66-74).

Finally, cultural racism originates from the attempt to preserve and protect from external threats a set of values, a precise view of the world and life style and from the rejection of different cultures and ideas of the good life. This interpretation of immigration results in a series of fixed answers to the phenomenon: when asked whether immigrants could be considered as 'normal' citizens, a high percentage of Italians answered 'as long as they respect the rules of our society' (FGCI survey carried out in Milan, in Balbo and Manconi, 1993: 75). The ambiguity of this answer lies in the fact that it does not discriminate between breaking the law and simply living according to values, religions and traditions different from mainstream ones.

As the section on the editorials of *La Padania* will highlight later on, in the case of the Northern League all three categories of racism mentioned above seem to play a role in the construction of a generally intolerant attitude: from the control of territory to the supposed superiority of Padanian culture over different sets of

values, from the simplification of immigrants' private lives to linking their presence with fears of security and public order. In this sense, this interpretation of 'the other' as a threat represents the premise for the development of an exclusionary model of citizenship aimed at the systematic marginalisation of foreigners.

6. The invention of Padania and a new exclusionary identity

In identifying the invention of Padania with the beginning of a new era in the Northern League's political response to immigration and in the creation of a new exclusionary identity, this section follows the interpretation offered by Bull and Gilbert in *The Lega Nord and the Southern Question in Italian Politics* (2001). They argue that if the ethno-regionalism developed by the party in order to provide Northerners with a shared identity could until 1996 be considered just a mere 'invention', later on downplayed by the leader himself, the advent of Padania determined a growing concern on the part of the League with the dangers implicit in a multiethnic state, on whom it declared war. They argue that the writings of party ideologue Gilberto Oneto, and particularly *L'invenzione della Padania* (1997), prove that the creation of the new nation represents a key-moment in the League's strategy and a central concept in the re-definition of its claims (Bull and Gilbert, 2001). Following Oneto, 'La Padania esiste geograficamente, etnicamente, linguisticamente, culturalmente ed economicamente (...) i suoi cittadini hanno lottato per affermare la propria identità nazionale. Non c'è bisogno di inventare qualcosa (la Padania) che esiste già. Inventare così significa ridefinire, ritrovare, ritornare a, riscoprire' (Oneto, 1997: 11). The important element in Oneto's definition of the new nation consists in the claim that a constructed national identity was imposed by Fascism on people to whom it denied the right of self-determination (Oneto, 1997; Bull and Gilbert, 2001: 115). This point assumes particular relevance in light of both the party's more recent exploitation of the concept of a common Italian

national identity as a means to reject immigrants and the rhetoric of victimhood that justifies such an exclusionary approach towards 'the other', as the analysis of the more recent debate will show.

Until the invention of Padania, the recurrent references to a fake Unification, to a systematic colonisation of the North on the part of the central state, and to the 'cultural cleansing' of what was described as a minority within the country, were mainly directed at reinforcing through a rhetoric based on victimhood a still weak unitary Northern identity, as it emerges for instance from Bossi's programmatic declarations contained in his *La rivoluzione*, written with journalist Daniele Vimercati in 1993. At that point, the future Padania was presented as a 'terra di conquista', and its people as a minority group whose different identity was not acknowledged by the state (Bossi and Vimercati, 1993: 24). According to Cachafeiro, 'The fabrication of a united North incorporated also a diverse and multicultural North. Sameness within the North also encompasses diversity. Lega politicians from Lombardy, Veneto and Piedmont assert the differences within the North but downplay their political relevance' (Cachafeiro, 2002: 103-104). This common identity was founded on the sameness of 'race', traditions, language and culture. Ethnicity was not the only criterion for territorial distinctiveness. Since the 1990s, Bossi has rejected this 'simplistic' interpretation and began to include 'economic identity' in the number of characteristics shared by Northerners. While the differences between Northern regions were considered minimal and irrelevant in this phase, those between the North and the South were instead described as fundamental. According to Diamanti, the enemy that nationalistic groups desperately need in order to reassert their own identity was clearly identified in the Southerner and in the central state. Until 1996 there is in fact still no sign of the new threat of the 'extracomunitario', as proved by the document 'Superare lo Stato centralizzato', the official programme of the party published in 1983. The document consists of a twelve-point list of programmatic declaration. These include the battle against the central state for the

allocation of resources, the autonomist project, the weak presence of Northerners in the public administration, and the federalist revolution (Lega Nord, 1983; Bossi, 1996. 12-12). Since 1996, as Cento Bull and Gilbert explain, the League has been getting closer to the positions typical of the New Right, particularly on immigration, while increasingly directing its interests towards ‘multiculturalism, American capitalism, European integration and the “other”, a phase characterised by a “profound cultural pessimism”’ (Cento Bull and Gilbert, 2001: 127). A comparison between the pamphlet cited above and other documents published by the Northern League since 1996, and particularly ‘Padania, identità e società multirazziale’ (Mussa, 1998), shows how radically the attitude towards immigration has changed .

The pamphlet argues that immigration from outside Europe is sustained if not promoted by a combination of forces such as global capitalism and the international Left that contribute to presenting it as a spontaneous and irreversible trend. The promotion of a multicultural society based on an individualistic and cosmopolitan view of citizens is supported by minority powers, which are, however ‘hegemonic’ in the cultural sphere, and therefore will inevitably bring about the destruction of local and territorial identities. As a consequence, this trend has to be opposed by ‘people and their desire for independence and self-determination’ (Mussa, 1998).

The document identifies five main points which correspond to as many strategies to protect this identity from the threat posed by immigration. It starts from the refusal to grant the vote to foreigners, who can never feel part of the community and feel a sense of duty towards the state, followed by the struggle to ‘save the specificity of our people’ and the need to give Padanians priority in the social services. It also states the necessity to start a ‘polite request for the return of non-EU foreigners to their homes’, while the last measure consists in a call for more investment in the

agriculture of non-European countries in order to provide their citizens with 'a dignified alternative' to migration (Mussa, 1998; Cento Bull and Gilbert, 2001: 128-9). The key elements of the party's current anti-immigration discourse, such as that of 'internal multiculturalism', 'conditioned/long-distance solidarity' and the feeling of victimhood, which will be analysed in the following section of this chapter, are already implicit in this document.

To summarise the main elements of this shift in the Northern League's strategy and ideology, it can be said that in the early days the party's discourse on identity was much more focused on the 'us' component rather than on the external 'them'. Southerners, as the 'other', played a role functional to the construction of a rhetoric based on victimhood used to gain autonomy from a tyrannical state. With the invention of Padania, however, the focus shifted from 'us' to 'them', the presence of immigrants, perceived not only as competitors in the allocation of resources but also as carrying an inner cultural and ethnic difference absolutely incompatible with Northerners' values and 'inevitably' resulting in a clash of civilisations. At this point, immigrants not only started being presented as dangerous for (potentially) stealing job opportunities but also for the 'invented' fixed characteristics attributed to them by *leghisti*, as for instance their supposed intention of colonising the Padania *and* Italy and imposing their own ideas of the good life. In the early days, the League's rhetoric on identity and otherness was seemingly based on the instrumental concepts of tolerance (towards the others as long as they stayed in their countries) and solidarity (towards its own people first of all and then to the 'others', following a long distance charitable approach to the Third World) always put forward with the double aim of rejecting the charge of racism and building bridges with the Catholic Church. However, more recently the party has launched several campaigns against immigration which leave no room for doubt. With the invention of Padania and the outline of a increasingly more exclusionary identity, the party lifted the veil on an implicit but

nonetheless substantial paradox. On the one hand, the North of the country keeps attracting immigrants who are much needed in the local economy, as recently shown by Andall (2009) in her analysis of the demand/offer ratio in some selected Northern provinces. On the other hand, its first political party develops a rhetoric of closure which entraps immigrants into fixed stereotypes and prevents them from integrating by making their presence relevant only in terms of public order and security. In other words, while they have to be employed in order to maintain the local economy in a healthy state, they are denied the most basic civil rights, from the voting to housing, while at the same time they are turned into the scapegoats for the North's problems, from criminality to pollution, from the decay of the cities to the growing fears linked to globalisation and secularisation.

Through the analysis of the Lega's more recent positions on immigration, the next section will try to show not only how foreigners are perceived by the *Padani* but also what long-term model of society the party is putting forward in reacting to the phenomenon. As anticipated in the Introduction, this is a model of an 'institutionalised state of exception' based on the idea that the only way to 'tolerate' the foreign presence within not only the North but the country as a whole, is to keep the newly arrived into a permanent state of precarious and temporary permanence.

7. The League's anti-immigrant rhetoric

Through the analysis of articles, interviews and editorials published in *La Padania* in the last three years, this section will provide a more detailed account of the party's position on immigration and the idea of an original, alternative identity behind it. It will try to show how the more exclusionary turn in the rhetoric on otherness since the invention of Padania, has become increasingly more radical during the past few years and how it translates into a battle fought on different fronts: from cultural/ideological discrimination to practical/everyday marginalisation of the immigrants. Moreover, it will investigate whether the League, in reacting to the foreign presence within the North of the country, is putting forward a specific or alternative model of citizenship.

The general impression in reading these interventions from *La Padania* is that they seem to follow a common pattern and be centred on two central issues presented as deeply linked: namely law and order and immigration. The discussion of these subjects involves the recurrent use of a predictable and fixed rhetoric based on the concepts of identity and otherness. The inner tension between the 'us' and 'them' poles is conveyed through the creation of an atmosphere of tension and fear, triggered by a precise communication strategy based on social alarmism. This rhetoric is sustained and brought in force by the use of terms such as: alarm; battle, emergency; peril; risk; terrorism; criminality; security; explosion; catastrophe; tragedy; suspicion; violence; colonization; invasion; Islamization and similar. It is indeed in these terms that the party addresses the issue of what is an open 'us' versus 'them' conflict, expressed by the opposition of two sets of contrasting stereotyped identities.

The first of these includes the values of culture, right to self-determination; nation; West; Christianity, truth, homeland, (our) people, tradition, rules of the state. The second one, which refers to immigrants, includes the terms clandestine, these people,

integralism, terrorism, Islam, Chinese mafia, (Islamic) propaganda, Islamic state, state within the state, Roma, guests, foreigners. The issues which concern the party are both ideological and practical: from the impossibility of a multiethnic society to council housing and the supposed discrimination of 'famiglie padane', just to mention a few examples. Throughout the years, the measures put forward by the League as adequate to solve these conflicts can be summarised with two recurrent slogans: 'tolleranza zero' and 'pugno di ferro' (Stefani, 2009; Carcano, 2006).

The first fact which emerges is the central importance of the discussion on identity to the party's public discourse. Padanian identity features in most of the articles, most of the time referred to as a 'lost' or 'threaten' identity, which needs to be rediscovered and emphasised. The titles of the articles are representative of this feeling of loss and fear and the consequent call for the defence of an oppressed or denied identity: 'L'Emilia riscopre la sua identità' (Iezzi, 2007a); 'Aiutiamo le nostre genti a riappropriarsi delle loro identità' (Polli, 2007a); 'Difendiamo la nostra terra dal furto della nostra identità' (Alessandri, 2007); 'Manifestare per difendere la nostra identità' (Bassi, 2007a). However, even though the expression 'la nostra identità' is recurrent in these interventions, this identity is defined only in negative terms, which is in relation to the events and circumstances which put it at risk. If in the early days of the party the supposedly common language, the economic and cultural environment, the local dimension of belonging and the Lutheran work ethics were presented as the essence of Padanian identity, the more recent definitions acquire a meaning only in opposition to 'otherness', following a common mechanism in the construction of all identities. The concepts of 'radici' (roots) and belonging to the territory still play a central role in the current debate as does the idea of 'nostra gente,' committed to the protection of this identity and to the autonomy of the new nation and its values (Polli, 2009). However, the focus has shifted towards the external element to the extent that, occasionally, Padanian

identity appears to consist precisely of this commitment to fight to preserve the status quo, in this claim for freedom and reaffirmation of the concept that the North is 'casa nostra' (Cota, 2009). In this sense, in order to provide a broader and more meaningful description on 'Padanianess', it is important to analyse it in relation to the perceived threat that is supposedly endangering it.

The first and more general threat identified by the party is globalisation, understood as a pervasive phenomenon, which penetrates not only the economic but also the cultural, political and social spheres. A globalised society is a society where the differences are levelled and people behave according to the same social principles all around the globe. To this 'utopian multi-racial society' the League opposes the preservation of differences, which also implies a 'sincere respect' for alternative ideas of the good life, as long as they are put into practice in the countries in which they developed. When addressing the 'issue of immigration', this differentialist approach advocates the need to give priority to immigrants who are easier to assimilate, while targeting Muslim immigrants as the least desirable (Bassi, 2007b; Ferrari, 2007). This is clearly the first of many links with the position of the Catholic Church analysed in the previous chapter. It is not only the people to be perceived as threatened but also the territory and its peculiar traditions. Interestingly enough, Catholicism is seen as a necessary counterpart to overcome the growing relativism and the announced Islamisation of the nation (Bassi, 2007c). As argued by Bossi in the speech given in Cà San Marco, 'L'individuo reciso da ogni legame con la propria terra e stirpe diventa così uno sradicato apolide, un albero senza radici e resistenza, in balia del vento del potere mondialista [...] I popoli non sono come l'acqua che si può mescolare a piacere. I popoli si mescolano con difficoltà. Gli uomini tornano sempre alle loro radici' (Bossi, 2006). When the links with the homeland weaken, 'un popolo (...) rischia l'annullamento': annihilation and colonization are the inevitable consequences of giving up the constant struggle aimed at 'tenerci

casa nostra' (Ibid.). The League puts forward a double strategy to accomplish this mission: on the one hand it proactively promotes cultural initiatives, such as the official Federalist Foundation promoted by MP Roberto Maroni and inaugurated in June 2007 with the aim of 'dare voce, sia sul piano teorico che su quello dell'azione concreta, a tutte quelle espressioni della cultura federalista e identitaria in Padania e non solo' (Poli, 2007). On the other hand it targets what it identifies as the real danger and the ultimate challenge to the survival of such identity: immigration and particularly Muslim immigration.

The issue of immigration is presented by the League through a rhetoric based on an apocalyptic interpretation of 'our future' that links it to other more general risks and catastrophes. This is why, according to the party, it is necessary to react first of all by sending out a 'grido d'allarme', 'allarme culturale' and 'allarme terrorismo' (Gibelli, 2007a; Mirabile, 2007a) in order to attract the attention on what is portrayed as an invasion (Montanari, 2007a), a national emergency (Garavaglia, 2007) which threatens 'il nostro futuro' and 'il futuro dei nostri figli' (Gallizzi, 2007). The future as imagined in these articles is everything but rosy since it will involve a long phase of decline which has already started and will result in a new Islamic Nazi-fascism (Montanari, 2007a; Montanari, 2007b; Boiocchi, 2007). This scream of warning is considered by the League as a duty, to spread awareness among the people of the fact that any reaction to the phenomenon other than rejection is dangerous, as in the case of the Left's attitude of 'buonismo' and false tolerance (Gibelli, 2007a; Iezzi, 2007b).

What was stated in reference to the region of Emilia is quite representative of the party's main concerns. According to him, 'the annihilation of the people' is determined by an ongoing war between the state in its local institutions and 'ethnic groups which do not want and cannot try to integrate' and which benefit from a set of privileges, such as the right to vote, that the central

government intend to grant them to the disadvantage of the local community, the only one to pay the price for this lack of rules. Among the rules which should be respected there is the Bossi-Fini law which ties immigration to work; the necessary investigations on the mosques that often are just 'falsi luoghi di culto' used to spread Islamic propaganda. The ruling class currently in power (at that time a centre-left coalition), Alessandri claims, has to be held morally responsible for the problems experienced by Northerners since its ignorance and private interests have turned Emilia into a 'terra di conquista' (land of conquest) (Alessandri, 2007). In general, it can be said that immigration is believed to be aggravating an already 'explosive' situation, a delicate phase that the country (interestingly enough the point of reference here is the old nation) and the entire world are facing and which corresponds to a loss of traditional values such as Christianity, and the role of the family, as this analysis will show. There are three main targets of the League's anti-immigrant campaign: the Chinese, the Romanian and all Muslims. The title of an article written by Northern League's MP Stefano Stefani and published on September 2007 seems to go to the heart of the problem, namely 'Noi, loro e la sicurezza'. 'Il crimine è crimine', Stefani argues, implying that there cannot be any justification for it and demanding adequate punishments. These three groups, the first of two characterised by a nationality and the third one by religious belonging, seem to be the crucial ones in the League's battle, which is carried out on two different levels. On the one hand, these immigrants, grouped under the indistinct definition of 'questa gente', represent a problem for law and order in Northern Italian cities, on the other hand, a fundamental issue with their presence is the clash of civilizations, ideas of life, religious and cultural difference, considered as absolutely incompatible with 'valori leghisti' (Montanari, 2007b).

Generally speaking, the references to daily violence and crime are rather vague: the facts are recalled quite superficially as are the

data on official surveys and investigations on the links between immigration and criminality. When referring to the police's and secret service's reports, the articles employ an ambiguous language: 'secondo un recente rapporto, 'recenti indagini', 'alla luce di quanto recentemente avvenuto a Perugia', 'come confermato dai servizi segreti, la situazione sul fronte terrorismo è particolarmente delicata', 'le parole del capo della polizia ci devono allarmare'. This strategy, while avoiding statistics, implies the existence of a strict relation between illegal immigration and problems of law and order as well as a constantly growing number of crimes presented as perpetrated by foreigners. Such crimes are often mentioned in the opening or at the very end of the article or interview serving a double function: on the one hand they justify at the beginning the strong opinions expressed in the core of the article, on the other hand they leave the reader with this image of immigrants as criminals and therefore with a last feeling of concern and fear (Alessandri, 2007; Bassi, 2007d). Apart from these more or less generic references to intelligence reports confirming and backing the concerns linked to the arrival of 'questa gente' in the country, the alarmism is also based on some specific problems which have arisen in the last few years. The events mentioned in these editorials are the following: a Chinatown revolt in Milan (Stucchi, 2007); the results of the investigations into the terroristic cells in Perugia, Turin and Cremona (Grimoldi, 2007; Indini, 2007a); the link between Islam and the new BR (Red Brigades) in an anti-American struggle (Cota 2007); the assassination of a couple in Treviso (Garavaglia, 2007); the hijacking of a bus (the article does not mention when and where this happened) (Gibelli, 2007b); the removal of the crucifix in Mangialli hospital in Milan (Gibelli, 2007c); the release of 'il Rom della strage', Marco Ahmetovic, who killed a group of friends in a drunken car accident (Bassi, 2007e); the Reggiani Killing (Roselli, 2007) .

Not only are these episodes not described in detail but they are just mentioned in passing while analysing more general and more

ideological issues that they aim to push at the centre of the political debate. This impression seems to be confirmed by the fact that other crimes, which happened at the same time, are not reported at all as if a few symbolic ones could be enough to justify the need for a broader discussion on immigration or, better, for a more decisive strategy to prevent and stop new arrivals in the country. Moreover, the articles contribute to crystallising immigrants' identities, with the result that certain groups will be indissolubly associated with a specific threat. In this sense, the Chinese are essentially Mafiosi and represent unfair competitors in the local economy. As reported by Borghezio at the EU parliament, 'La mafia cinese oggi è molto potente. Nel corso degli anni ha fatto un salto di qualità attrezzandosi addirittura in anticipo per le sfide della globalizzazione. Rappresenta il pericolo numero uno per il nostro futuro: è l'associazione mafiosa meglio organizzata e dunque più pericolosa' (Gallizzi, 2007). According to the MP, Italian politicians cannot turn their heads away and pretend to ignore what is going on. He takes an unspecified 'Chinatown revolt' in Milan to argue that the Chinese community in the city is blackmailing the state, which has showed its weakness and its incapability to respond adequately. Moreover, he remarks upon a shared belief among the party members that 'queste comunità cinesi tendono a non integrarsi come dovrebbero, ma a costruire uno stato nello stato', which they finance through a series of illegal activities such as smuggling clandestines through the country (Ibid.). What is interesting here is the fact that Borghezio, speaking on behalf of his party, concludes his intervention by repeating that the battle against the Chinese power has to be considered as the first priority.

The first priority seems also to be that of dealing with the Muslim community, as clearly emerges from a number of articles on the subject. Muslim immigrants feature in most of these articles and their presence in Padania and beyond is constantly portrayed as a bomb ready to explode, 'bomba sulla nostra testa' (Cota, 2007) 'bombe a orologeria' (Gibelli, 2007d). The party's representatives

seem to be primarily concerned with the 'rischio terrorismo', based on the assumption that Muslim organizations are linked to the new BR and are ready to join their battle against America and the West (Cota, 2007). They see in the Left's *laissez faire* attitude and their proposal for a new law on freedom of religion a way to open the doors to the Islamisation of 'our society' (Montanari, 2007b). The mosques are nothing but 'strutture che servono a proteggere integralisti o terroristi, che molto spesso sono la stessa cosa' (Mirabile, 2007; Gazzotti, 2007; Iezzi, 2009) and in this respect they are a clear example of how the project of integration has ultimately failed as much as any attempt to build a multicultural society in countries such as the UK (Gibelli, 2007e). Indeed, mosques contribute to create ghettos which become a 'culla di terrorismo islamico' (Gibelli, 2007d; Girardin, 2009) and therefore should be closely monitored if not closed (Polli, 2007b). These 'centrali del terrore' hide and protect people who have been trained to think that 'è compito di ogni buon mussulmano prevaricare gli occidentali', a message that has become clear after September 11 and the Madrid and London bombings (Indini, 2007a). A number of vaguely mentioned reports from Carabinieri and the secret services warn that 'l'Italia [é] nel mirino del terrorismo Islamico', presenting the country as the next target of terroristic attacks (Iezzi, 2009). This threat cannot take anyone by surprise since 'l'Islam non ha mai dimostrato di essere moderato' (Indini, 2007a) and its followers have never committed themselves to respect the laws and duties required by their country of arrival (Ibid.) since it does not contemplate any exception to its 'pensiero unico': 'C'è troppa gente che con la scusa di una ricerca del lavoro e per motivi di studio costruisce e addestra figure pronte a colpire in ogni momento. E la minaccia terroristica anche in armi di distruzione di massa è sempre più forte' (Gibelli, 2007d).

The threat of terroristic attacks is not the only concern of the League: 'Questa è un'autentica guerra di civiltà. Contro di noi, contro la libertà e la democrazia a favore dell'assolutismo religioso

e contro la ragione umana' (Gibelli, 2007d). This interpretation recalls that of some representatives of the Church and Ratzinger's Regensburg lecture analysed in the previous chapter. This presence is believed to represent a threat for the future of 'i nostri figli' (Ibid.), our 'piazze' and our people (Garibaldi, 2007c). To this challenge only the League seems to be ready to react, emerging as the 'ultimo baluardo contro l'invasione' (Montanari, 2007a), a role shared by its youth movement, committed to the respect of Padanian laws and traditions, against the burqa and 'fedeli al concetto di "ognuno padrone a casa sua"' (Lega Nord, 2004). Besides the clash of civilization, the party seems concerned with a number of practical issues which arise from the foreign presence. If in the case of Muslims a clear issue is the request to remove the crucifixes from public spaces (Gibelli, 2007c), other 'problems' concerning all immigrants and their requests have proved central to the League's rhetoric. Examples include the question of council houses, which should be assigned to Padanians first of all, whereas the 'extracomunitari' should not be given the right to be included in the waiting lists. One article announces that 'Grazie alla Lega finalmente non ci saranno solo Muhammed nelle graduatorie per le case popolari' (Lega Nord, 2005). This position is coherent with the party's commitment to defend the territory, its squares, streets and neighbourhoods. Moreover, immigrants should not be given the right to vote, even after a certain number of years of continued residence in the country, a position which is diametrically opposed to that of the Left. The latter is consequently perceived as the first cause of the problems linked with immigration and criticized for its false tolerance.

To conclude this overview on immigration, it can be said that there seem to be a number of practical reasons for the rejection of the immigrants. Most are summarized in a sort of manifesto which explains that these are of an economic, social and health and safety nature. At the economic level, it is argued that employing foreign labour at low salaries will end up damaging the local economy and

make it less competitive with the rest of Europe while triggering the discontent of native Padanians. At a social level, it states that Padanians and Italians are not ready for the changes brought about by immigrants, and that these alternative life styles represent a trauma for an otherwise homogeneous society. This is why the League declares itself ready to contribute to helping the disadvantaged nations in their own territory. This last strategy plays an important role in the construction of a mono-directional long-distance solidarity, which will be addressed later on in this chapter.

Moreover, the document remarks upon the fact that granting medical care to everybody without distinguishing between the locals and the immigrants (above all illegal immigrants) is not fair towards the *Padani* who pay taxes and contribute to the economic growth of the country. Finally, the article expresses a request of central importance for the party: namely that immigrants should be dealt with at a local level (Indini, 2007b, Garibaldi, 2007b). This request is often presented as the ultimate solution and is reinforced by the League's project of a federal state which is presented as the best form of state also in responding to the challenge of immigration (Ibid.). However, while working on the project of a federal state, the party has also put forward a number of measures to confront 'the other', 'quella gente'. These measures will only be mentioned here, as they will be the subject of the last chapter of this thesis, which will deal with the laws passed by different governments. One of these measures, suggested as a partial solution is that of taking immigrants' fingerprints in order to have more control on their identity and their movements (Maccanti, 2007). The range of initiatives is broad and stretches from the idea of using the navy to prevent the arrivals (and if necessary bomb the ships) to the call for public demonstrations against immigration in the squares of Padania, to more folkloristic threats such as the 'maiale day' planned by MP Calderoli, which consists of 'profaning' the building site destined for a mosque with pig manure (Pandini, 2007). This is not dissimilar to the MP's public statement

on his plans to 'celebrate' the beginning of the Ramadan by eating pork ribs (Ibid.).

The interventions of the Lega's representatives are reinforced through the use of military metaphors, which include the terms 'guerra' (war) 'barricate' (barricades) 'trincea' (trench) 'battaglia' (battle) 'lotta' (fight). However, as mentioned above, while the main battle-ground sees the League fighting its number one enemy, the immigrants, it also carries on another offensive against an internal adversary, namely the Left, which it holds responsible for the national emergency, often perceived as resulting from an ideologically oriented response on the part of the Left-wing coalition.

The League was most critical while in opposition suggesting that such protest had the twofold aim of attacking immigration while undermining its political adversaries' credibility in dealing with the situation. The party accuses 'la sinistra' of acting in the name of a false tolerance merely aimed at achieving electoral results, for instance by allowing immigrants to vote in general elections after five years of residence in Italy. It accuses left-wing parties of looking at the issue of immigration through the 'pink' lense of an ideology based on a fake 'buonismo' (Gibelli, 2007f; Roselli, 2007). In this sense, according to Bossi and his followers, it is this political class that should be recognised as racist, since it deludes people in need with the dream of better conditions of life and a series of promises that the country, at the moment, does not have the possibility to fulfil (Montanari, 2007c; 'Mirabile, 2007b). With its attitude of openness and optimism, the centre-left coalition has shown the immigrants that 'the door is open', that illegal immigrants will not be punished but on the contrary will be looked after (Polli, 2007b; Carcano, 2007). Such an irresponsible attitude has had as its first result that of institutionalising the clandestine presence within the country (Iezzi, 2007c). The leftist intelligentsia is presented as trapped in its political correctness and driven by the

aim of proving the irrationality of citizens' concerns in order to achieve an electoral consensus. This idea of 'tolerance' is denounced by the League as 'empty', 'fake' as well as leading to irresponsible and inadequate political action and qualifies these political representatives as the 'real Talibans'. Once again the citizens' life, homeland and culture are put at risk by those who insist on presenting 'security' as a false problem (Garibaldi, 2007b; Baldi, 2009; Gibelli, 2007g). In arguing that the real racism is that of its political opponents, the Northern League's representatives attempt not only to discredit the Left but also to prove that their party cannot be perceived as racist, since it only promises things that it cannot grant. Moreover, the party's resentment towards the Left is due also to the fact that the Left has also opted for zero tolerance and demanded the expulsion of all Roma, in times of crisis, such as after Reggiani's killing on 30 October 2007 at the Tor di Quinto station in Rome (Roselli, 2007): 'Prima buonisti, ora sceriffi. Ma quando queste cose succedono al Nord nessuno a Roma ha mai mosso un dito. Sono razzisti al contrario' (Ibid.). According to the League's representatives, this is a clear sign that they were right and that, in dealing with immigration, political parties should not compromise, since the only possible solution to the 'problem' is that of expelling even the communitarians (Montanari, 2007c) and prevent new arrivals tout court (Garibaldi, 2007c). Alternatively, they can go and live 'nei comuni di centro sinistra dove sanno di essere accolti con buonismo e tolleranza (...) la questione principale non è neanche che tipo di politiche attuare perché il problema è che queste persone non devono neanche entrare nel paese perché non abbiamo la possibilità di assorbire queste comunità in termini di lavoro. Senza parlare del fatto che loro non hanno nessuna volontà e intenzione di integrarsi con noi' (Mirabile, 2007c).

The constant references to a difficult economic phase and to the difficulties met by Padanians themselves to find jobs contribute to justifying in rational terms the party's complete rejection of

immigrants while showing the failure and incoherence of the Left and its responsibility for turning the immigrants into victims. Indeed, the *leghisti* believe that the citizens' occasionally violent reactions towards them can be explained by the fact that they are 'stufi' with the situation and with being denied the right to self-determination, which can be summarised in the well-known formula 'essere padroni a casa propria' (Cota, 2009).

The case of Romanians is emblematic of both this idea that Italians must react if they want to be in control of their territory and of the conflict with the Left. Slogans such as 'Se torniamo al governo via i Romeni' (Roselli, 2007) were used in the League's electoral campaigns to gain a broader consensus. If Chinese and Muslim immigrants are tied to their fixed identity as Mafiosi and terrorists, the case of Romanians is ever more controversial. Most of the time simply labelled as 'zingari', they are denied any recognition of their identity and internal difference in term of ethnic, cultural, national and religious belonging. The common trait under which they are grouped together is that of their nomadic lifestyle, while no distinction is made between non-nomadic Romanians, Roma and Sinti of other nationalities, included Italian. Indeed, despite the fact that many of them are Italian and have been such for centuries, they represent the ultimate 'foreigner' and the essential criminals. Their innate difference is expressed through a series of stereotypes, as for instance the fact that 'Il furto per i nomadi non ha lo stesso significato che ha per noi' (Gibelli, 2007a). Their presence is linked with an increase in criminality and particularly with a rise of theft, child kidnapping and all sorts of 'heinous crimes' in the immediate proximity of their camps. This is why the mayors of the North demand the power to deal with them at a local level, with the aim of forbidding their presence within their cities and sending them to build their barracks in councils ruled by the 'more tolerant' Left (Gibelli, 2007a; Roselli, 2007). Perceived as seeking to exploit a state that they do not recognize and to live by stealing what they did not work for, they represent

the last 'other', the most marginalized community (Ibid.). The idea that Italians have the right to control and protect their territory justifies the increasing violence against immigrants, actions that occasionally are not only legitimised but even triggered by some among the League's most extreme representatives. While legitimising such violent episodes, the party follows a double strategy in order to present itself as non racist: on the one hand it remarks upon the idea that Italians (not only Padanians) are the real victims and those discriminated against as they cannot be 'padroni' in their own home, while, on the other hand, it reminds its detractors of the fact that solidarity represents a central value of the Lega's political thought. According to this rhetoric of victimhood, not only are 'leghisti' unfairly considered racist, but they are also denied the right to freedom of expression, since every time they make public their position on immigration they are classified as intolerant. This was the case with the arrest in Brussels of European MP Borghezio following his demonstration outside the parliament wearing an anti-Islam T-shirt in September 2007. The party commented that episode stating that in Europe as much as in Italy people are denied the right to express their ideas in a peaceful way (Boiocchi, 2007). As a result, according to them, they have become the ultimate victims, to whom the most basic civil rights are denied, while the need to be politically correct brings about paradoxical situations such as that of removing the crucifix from classrooms in order not to offend Muslim pupils and families (Gibelli, 2007c; Gibelli, 2007h; Montanari, 2007a). This last case is considered emblematic of a clear discrimination against Italian citizens together with a series of other situations, as for instance the fact that they have to pay taxes to fund the CPT (Centro di permanenza temporanea) in Lampedusa and pay for people that, once escaped, will also steal from their houses. Another example is that of tourists who travel on planes which also take on board illegal immigrants who need to be brought back to their countries. Both examples are used here to show how Italians are the true victims (Polledri and

Maraventano, 2007). If the groups of immigrants mentioned until now share the common characteristic of being plotters planning to exploit the state without respecting it, others are, according to the party's strategy, those who need its solidarity. Whenever the League is accused of being racist, its leader and followers are keen to remind their detractors of the several initiatives and foundations that see them committed to providing relief and support for disadvantaged populations in their own countries. Such philanthropic actions are carried out in the name of an immutable principle: 'aiutiamoli ad aiutarsi' or 'aiutiamoli a casa loro' (Bossi, 2009). This principle, derived from the party's anti-colonial belief that people have the right to be sovereign in their own countries, is aimed at demanding the same attitude of respect for Italian citizens. The anti-immigrant rhetoric of the articles published in *La Padania* is often mitigated by the claim that 'Umanitaria Padania' or Co.Pa (Cooperazione Padana) has always been active in offering support to countries such as Somalia, Serbia, Romania, Eritrea, Bulgaria and others (Mariani, 2006). These initiatives, as well as those of the voluntary association interestingly named 'guerrieri della pace', are usually only mentioned to prove a more general point – the Northern League is not racist – whereas in none of the articles examined is it possible to find details of what exactly has been done in each country. The point here is clearly that of showing how the party's political action takes into account the value of solidarity. A brief analysis of the latter, in relation to the concept of Christian charity, is useful in order to better understand how both the League's definition of (national) identity and the relationship with the Catholic Church have changed in the last decade and more precisely since the Muslim presence within the country has taken centre stage in the debate on immigration.

8. The League and the Catholic Church, selective and long-distance solidarity

Following Oneto, 'La solidarietà e l'amore per il prossimo rientrano sicuramente fra i doveri cristiani che sono parte della nostra cultura, ma che meritano alcune considerazioni: innanzitutto il prossimo (lo dice la parola) è chi ci è prossimo, vicino, parente, familiare. Il nostro prossimo vero è chi appartiene alla nostra comunità antica e chi ha sottoscritto con noi un contratto sociale, anche istituzionale. Poi, se ne avanza, ci si dedica agli altri, ma questa estensione non può essere intesa come un dovere comunitario' (Oneto, 2004). Despite the fact that Oneto, to a certain extent, takes distance from the Christian idea of an indiscriminate universal solidarity, it is important here to remember that the Catholic Church itself has recently moved towards a more restrictive idea of the concept, as proved by the CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference) guidelines to deal with the concession of churches, or other premises belonging to the Church, to non-Catholic religious groups.

What is interesting in the Northern League's rhetoric on solidarity is the fact that it also stresses the need for a common Christian identity that needs to be protected from the Islamization of the country (Indini, 2007a). In this sense, the endangered identity which the party is committed to save from external threats becomes one primarily characterized by its Catholicism and, even more interestingly, a national one. In other words, when referring to a dying culture, threatened by the arrival of immigrants, the League has recently extended this identity to all Italians while using the terms 'Italian' and 'Catholic' or 'Christian' as interchangeable. In this respect, by taking the streets of Padania to demonstrate against immigration in the attempt to protect Italian identity, the League is also 'in piazza per salvare i cristiani' (Gibelli, 2007h). Another common enemy of both the Church and the political party is what this latter defines as 'questo laicismo che

ci mortifica'. Secularism is associated by the League with political correctness: both attitudes, used in the attempt not to offend cultures different from 'ours', force Italians to deny or reject the historical Catholic traditions which informed Italian national identity (Gibelli, 2007c).

Solidarity, according to the Lega, has to be reciprocal and dialogue is only possible with those countries which show respect for this identity. In this sense, Italy and the West in general should fight for their rights not only at home but also abroad, in countries such as Saudi Arabia or Pakistan, where Catholics are discriminated against because of their religion and are not free to wear religious symbols or celebrate mass even in private spaces, and are losing their jobs for the same reason (Maroni et al., 2007). Intolerance towards Catholicism is considered as 'intolleranza verso la nostra cultura', 'una ritrovata identità che non può certo essere barattata con il pacifismo a scapito della verità' (Ibid). While accusing Islam of being intolerant in its claim to be the only true religion, the League presents Catholicism in the same terms (Ibid.). The parallel with the attitude of the Catholic Church in this respect is too striking not to assume that the League is actually borrowing the Church's language to put forward its claims, occasionally even quoting Pope Benedict XVI, following a strategy aimed at turning Padania's war against immigration into a common battle for Christianity and Italian national identity, and therefore relevant for the whole country and for the West in general (Gibelli, 2007b). Both political actors put forward a definition of the concept of solidarity based on the idea of reciprocity and directed exclusively at selected groups, who are perceived as easier to assimilate, while considering the case of Muslim immigrants as the ultimate other, the enemy within, that needs to be fought rather than integrated.

Despite this common battle and the recurrent references to a new definition of Italian Catholic identity, the League has not entirely sorted its difficult relationship with the Church. The Church is after

all still the political actor most critical of the measures put forward by the party to deal with immigration, which it often describes as racist and unacceptable, as for instance after the recent approval of the so-called ‘pacchetto sicurezza’ and the introduction of the crime of clandestinity (Anon., 2009f). However, this relationship has deeply changed in the last decade, and the two powers are today closer than ever before, as can be proven by looking at the first hostile exchange of views between the two in the early 1990s.

As Moia recalls, scholars were quite surprised when ‘a survey commissioned to the Department of Sociology of the Università Cattolica by the Christian Democratic Party revealed that the majority of the Northern League supporters were young, wealthy, self employed and had voted until then for the DC. The most worrying result of the investigation was, according to researchers, the fact that more than two thirds of the interviewed defined themselves as practising Catholics. A statement which indicated a belonging [to Catholicism] incompatible with the support given to an “autonomist utopia” characterised by a strong racist attitude, social egoism, lack of solidarity’ (Moia, 1997: 5). Scholars’ bewilderment was justified by years of difficult relationships between the Church and the Lega, during which the party had several times tried to win the Catholic support while at the same time provoking the Church and more or less directly challenging its power (Moia, 1997). The document *Ripartire dal popolo*, written by Pivetti in 1991 to prove that her party was committed to the values of family and solidarity, was aimed at overcoming the rejection on the part of the Church of what its representatives perceived as an intolerant political actor that they were not willing to engage in dialogue with (Moia, 1997). The League’s second attempt to gain legitimacy came in December of the same year, when the Catholic hierarchy officially recognized the Republics of Slovenia and Croatia, a move based on the acknowledgement of people’s right to self-determination. The news was immediately reported in *Autonomia Lombarda*, the Lega’s newspaper, in an

article which underlined how the same opinion could apply to the Padanian case and how this position could be interpreted as a sign that after years of suspicion the Church's attitude towards the party and its idea of federalism, initially considered 'parochial' and 'xenophobic', was eventually changing (Moia, 1997: 131).

In 1992, the scandal of 'mani pulite' played a double role in this relationship, contributing on the one hand to uniting the Church and the League to stand against the traditional political parties while, on the other hand, giving Bossi's party a pretext to attack the Catholic hierarchy for its connivance with the old DC, deeply involved in the scandals (Pivetti, 1992). At that time, Moia recalls, 'i tempi dell'apertura sono ancora lontani' (Moia, 1997: 42). The Church started recognising the party when it became relevant in terms of electoral results in the 1996 elections: since then many Catholic representatives, such as Cardinals Martini and Ruini and Como bishop Maggiolini, started reconsidering their previous judgment of the party and opening to the League (Moia, 1997). In general, what Moiola said in 1991 about this relationship can be still considered valid today: 'l'intransigente avversione della Chiesa al leghismo' is inversely proportional to the Church's participation in politics. In other words, the less the single representatives are active in the political arena, the more they criticize Bossi's party (Moioli, 1991: 131). This pattern seems to confirm an element which emerged in the previous chapter from the analysis of the role of the Church in the debate on immigration: the higher the position Catholic representatives occupy in Church's hierarchy, the more they show concern for the phenomenon. This is particularly true when the debate on immigration focuses on Muslim foreigners. On this theme the Church and the League seem to share today more than the Church would admit, as both this and the previous chapter have shown. To simplify, it could be said that the Church works on two different levels: on the one hand its hierarchy officially condemns anything the League expresses in politically incorrect terms and anything which can be seen by

public opinion as racist, insisting instead on the values of dialogue and mutual understanding. On the other hand, it takes part in controversial initiatives as long as they are justified by some sort of pseudo-intellectual premise, as happened for instance when priest Don Baget Bozzo and Cardinal Giacomo Biffi gave a speech during a demonstration against immigration organised by the League to celebrate the anniversary of the battle of Poitiers as a definitive moment of victory over Islam on the part of Christianity (Guolo, 2004).

The presence of Catholic representatives at a demonstration which had the double aim of reaffirming the supremacy of Christianity and protecting its values from Muslim assault was not commented on neither by the Pope nor by any other member of the hierarchy. This is not the only occasion when representatives of the League and of the Church have stood united against Islam: another example is the participation of some of them at the demonstration against the project for the construction of a mosque in Lodi (Anon., 2002a). Leaving aside the different reasons behind the League's and the Church's response to Muslim immigration, it can be said that what clearly emerges as their common concern is the threat it poses to a traditional and Catholic Italian national identity. In this sense, by turning the struggle for the North into a struggle for the nation and for Christianity, the League set out on a path already taken by the Church in its attempt to link its own decline with that of the nation. It is quite clear that this shift in the relationship between the two powers was purely instrumental and centred only on the identification of the enemy rather than in the strategies to defeat it. Finally, both powers are more concerned with achieving their own goals, whether it means (re)gaining a declining support or obtaining privileges in the allocation of resources, more than with immigration. Nevertheless, they cooperate to highlight the need for the state to develop stricter measures in dealing with immigration. In order to conclude the discussion on the League's response to immigration and the comparison with the Church's

reaction, it is now necessary to address the definition of the model put forward by the political party, as it emerges from the analysis carried out until this point.

9. The immigrant as a homo sacer and the permanent state of exception

The review of the articles recently published in *La Padania* showed how and to what extent the party's anti-immigration stance evolved in the last three years. This analysis has provided a fairly complete picture of the concerns and a general, albeit implicit, outline of the alternative idea of citizenship which emerges from such concerns. The debate on the concepts of identity and otherness in the League's public discourse contributed to putting forward an original and very exclusionary idea of coexistence of different life styles and ideas of the good life characterized by its attitude of closure towards the newly arrived. Many of the traits defined by scholars as typical of different racisms are evident in the Lega's political thought. As already mentioned, the party's attitude to foreigners is marked by a constant struggle justified by the need to 'save' a threatened identity. Evident signs of territorial racism are linked to the battle to keep control of physical places, such as squares, streets and in general the idea of 'territory', particularly when the places 'won' to the locals were destined to be turned into mosques or when the concentration of foreigners belonging to the same ethnic group supposedly threatens the local economy or social life, as in the case of Milan's Chinatown. The latter case is emblematic of competitive racism on the part of the League and its supporters, as the hostility is triggered by the prejudice that immigrants are unfair competitors in the market place as well as in the allocation of resources, which should be granted to the Padanian/Italian population in the first place. Additional racism also features clearly in the party's political action and public discourse. Following Balbo and Manconi, this is characterised by

the need to provide intolerant attitudes with a rational justification and is articulated in three main phases: the constant comments on criminal facts and their exaggeration, the representation of immigrants' life as miserable and the complete neglect of their everyday life or the private dimension of their life, which are all factors that clearly inform the League discourse on immigration. As the review of the League's articles tried to show, the process through which foreigners acquire relevance in the national media merely in relation to their being 'criminal' or a threat, is characterised by the vagueness of the information provided and by a language that relies on 'assumptions' and 'probabilities', which have as their first result that of triggering irrational and often unjustified fears among the public.

These worries of the local society, regardless of how distant from an objective interpretation of the situation, become then 'reality', according to a mechanism described by scholars such as Dal Lago as 'autopoietico'. Until the end of the First Republic, the state and the different subcultures provided a coherent image of Italian society and contributed to putting forward a shared and unchallenged 'definition' of a society which, despite internal tensions, could be perceived as unitary. This 'sapere uniforme' typical of the 1990s was considered a means to distinguish what was moral/legal from what was not (Dal Lago, 2004: 77). Since the 1990s however, the 'canovaccio', the scheme followed by the newspapers when referring to immigration, was a fixed one, characterised by three phases: a direct threat to the locals on the part of immigrants, the protest of the locals, the arrival of the police and the (only temporary) relief for the locals, destined to last only the brief period of time between different 'assaults' or crimes (Ibid: 73). In the case of the League, it can be said that this last phase of relief does not feature in the discourse on immigration as the fear is exasperated to a level when the threat is presented as constant and the crimes committed as increasing in number and brutality. As Dal Lago explains, this mechanism is nothing more than an empty

tautology, since it is the very action of sending out an alarm which 'proves' the fact it is denouncing (Ibid). In other words, the process of providing definitions of reality works according to a mechanism in which if citizens define a situation as real, then its consequences became real (Thomas, 1928).

As classic studies on the autopoietic construction of reality have shown, subjective definitions of a situation become real, and therefore objective, particularly when they are related to delicate aspects such as the fear of a perceived enemy (Dal Lago, 2004: 73; Goffman, 1981). This particular way of 'manufacturing' reality is reinforced by the generally accepted idea that the victim has the right to be the first to provide a definition of the situation, which inevitably will influence the following definitions (Dal Lago, 2004: 74). By exploiting the change in the paradigm used to provide these definitions, determined by the crisis of the 1990s, the Northern League has managed to turn 'fear' into a means to shape public opinion and gain support (Ibid.: 77). Another classic mechanism which assumes particular relevance in the party's rhetoric consists in the 'victimisation' of the aggressor and in transferring the blame onto the real victims (Ibid.: 63). In this sense, by presenting themselves as discriminated against in not being granted freedom of expression and in being sanctioned for their racism, the party's representatives can turn the immigrants into the perpetrators and portrait them as not only aggressive and not willing to accept 'Italian' (Catholic) values but also as the direct cause of the *leghisti*'s marginalisation in their own territory. Taking this process a step further, it then becomes clear that the status of victim and the frustration of the locals can be used, and indeed have been used, to justify episodes of violence against the immigrants, turned into the target of an 'acceptable' or 'understandable' intolerance.

By making the immigrant relevant to the political life of the country only in 'virtue' of the crimes s/he commits or is 'naturally inclined' to commit and preventing her/him from acquiring any

role but scapegoat in the public sphere, the League turns him into a 'homo sacer,' as Agamben describes him. In his *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), the philosopher analyses the classical definitions of sovereignty and citizenship in the attempt to describe phenomena such as Fascism and the Holocaust. Through the categories of rule, example and exception, and inclusion and exclusion, Agamben defines the *homo sacer* as the 'exception' (from the Latin *ex capere*, to take outside). The *homo sacer* represents an exception as he is banned from society and all his rights are revoked; his life is crystallised in a condition in which he can be killed without his killers being sanctioned but he cannot be sacrificed in a ritual. His is a 'human life [...] included in the juridical order solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed)' (Agamben, 1998: 8). In this sense, his figure is symmetrical to that of the sovereign in his being inside and outside the law at the same time. Agamben distinguishes between human beings' 'zoe' (bare life) and 'bios' (qualified life and therefore also and mainly political life) and argues that the *homo sacer* is considered simply as bare life and is not recognised in the political sphere. To a certain extent, he represents the limit, indeed the exception, essential to set the rule: he is excluded from the good life only achievable through politics while existing as a body that cannot reach a 'life worth being lived' in the only possible way, which is through the state and therefore through recognition by the sovereign (namely the law). This bare life that characterises the *homo sacer*, according to Agamben, is 'a life that as such is exposed to a violence without precedent in the most profane and banal ways' (Ibid.: 114). The bare life 'expresses precisely both life's subjection to a power over death and life's irreparable exposure in the relation of abandonment' (Agamben, 1998: 83). Here lies the paradox of the condition of the *homo sacer*: he can be recognised by society precisely and only for his being just bare life and precluded from acquiring political relevance. In this sense, the law that decides on the exclusion at the same time gives the

individual an identity. This identity consists in being the exception, outside the society and the law and for this reason 'included in it' as what is different from the norm, what citizens can measure their inclusion against.

Immigrants, by occupying the bottom level in the work sector, have traditionally contributed to elevating the status of those locals who used to be 'the last' in the social ladder and therefore have also made it possible for Italians to acquire a new and more desirable role within society and to build a new confidence and feeling of achievement. In this sense, to a certain extent immigrants were included in the receiving society as their status was different in level but not in substance from that of the natives, as in the case of Southerners who had migrated to the North since the 1950s and who, despite an initial discrimination, found in the factories and in the workers' struggle a means to integrate. On the contrary, the *homo sacer*'s presence is not considered to be of the same nature as that of citizens. Not only is he not relevant as a term of comparison in the judgement of what is to be successful or integrated, he simply is not part of that social ladder and therefore has no chance to move up and to be included or to integrate. As Agamben explains, the *homo sacer* can be included within society only by being identified as the outsider, the one who does not belong. This condition is permanent as it constitutes precisely the essence, the nature that characterises that human being and his category. The *homo sacer* cannot escape his destiny of exclusion as this does not depend on his actions or intentions/desires but is determined by birth.

Even though outlined for a different context, namely to account for the state of exception represented by Fascism and of the threat imposed by it onto the 'sacred men', the victims, the character of the *homo sacer* resembles that of the immigrant as intended by the Northern League. In this sense, the immigrant, illegal and legal, is excluded from taking part in the political life and from access to

civil rights, while, at the same time, he becomes part of the society as 'the exception', the bare life, and can be included into it only in virtue of this status as 'other'. This means that the concession to enter the country can be granted only as permanently temporary, precarious and subjected to a law that the immigrant cannot contribute to formulating nor can he challenge. Immigrants are allowed to interact with the community only as bare life, only as living signs of the boundary between the inside and the outside. Their life is in the hands of the sovereign as he can decide on their 'life' and 'death', which is their being temporarily accepted or permanently/temporarily excluded, whereas the option of being permanently accepted is not contemplated. As Agamben argues, we live in a society where the state of exception is increasingly common and can be extended indefinitely according to the will of the sovereign, or, in other words, of the law and of those who have the power of formulating and enforcing it. In this sense, the Northern League, with its influence in the state decision-making on the issue of immigration and for its actual 'being' the state can be seen as the sovereign who has the power to decide on the life and death of the immigrant. Life here does not coincide with rights: the premise for this comparison between the immigrant and the *homo sacer* is that they have neither rights nor the chance to change their status. Life means instead the temporary concession/permission to live in the country until the circumstances, the laws created by the sovereign, change. What is important here is also the fact that in his being outside the law, the sovereign does not need to justify rationally or to explain the shifts or sudden turns in its strategy of government and therefore, applying this to the situation of immigrants, also in regulating their presence within the country. The practical implications of this mechanism, whereby immigrants can be granted a temporary and revocable right to live in the country or expelled from the territory on the basis of a new disposition or new laws (Agamben, 1998: 16), will be analysed in the following chapter, which will focus on the laws on immigration

An example of arbitrary decisions on the part of the sovereign in this respect is the exploitation of an ambiguous presentation of the offer/demand ratio in the work sector, coupled with a stereotyped interpretation of immigrants' identities and incompatibility with the nationals. This is the case of the so-called 'badanti', whose role has been often and again recently discussed with reference to their being much needed in an ageing society in which women's productive and reproductive roles have become difficult to reconcile. The League's position on the subject has been one of support for the regularisation of more female immigrants but strictly limited to those employed to look after the elderly. These new *sanatorie* have been presented by the party as *una tantum*, exceptional measures. In this sense, those who will be allowed to enter the country will benefit from an exception to the rule (no more immigrants) that can be revoked, extended or suspended at any time by the sovereign and in this sense represents a typical case of precariousness. In an opposite way, the party's rhetoric against the regularisation of male immigrants is justified by the idea of a saturated job market which does not take into account the real needs of the country and is based on the stereotyped idea that immigrants steal locals' jobs and make the economy weaker and less competitive. This position exposes the League's schizophrenia, the gap between the public discourse aimed at gaining electoral success and the real demand for an immigrant workforce on the part of the factories of the North. In its manifest contradiction, this purely strategic attitude can be labelled as 'simulative politics' in the meaning given to the expression by Blühdorn (2007) and Cento Bull (2009) as the following chapter will argue.

In publicly denying both entry to a clearly much needed foreign labour force and the benefits it has brought and would bring to the local and national economy while portraying the immigrants as 'parasites', the party seems to suffer from a manifest 'spider flower syndrome'. *Arachnitis uniflora*, vulgarly called 'flor de la arana' (spider flower) has been recently discovered in Chile by a group of

German scientists from Basel University, who realised that despite its external similarity with other plants, it is not capable of carrying out a photosynthesis. They analysed the plant in order to understand what alternative strategy it had developed in order not to die. As they explain, many species of plants generally grow close to fungi which they use to extract minerals from the soil, while giving back to them sugars that they are unable to find. This relationship between plants and fungi is commonly described by researchers as one of cooperation and mutual support in the giving and receiving balance, even though the fungi are usually perceived by a less informed public as archetypal parasites. What is interesting in the research of the German team is that the *Arachnitis* cannot produce the sugar through photosynthesis, and therefore is unable to provide the fungi with such sugars. Nonetheless, it manages to exploit them by taking the minerals they extract from the soil and at the same time using them as bridges to take the sugars from other plants near them. In this sense, while it takes both minerals and sugars by exploiting the fungi, it does not give anything back and therefore can be considered as the true parasite, which explains why it is commonly called 'the cheater'. Another element of interest in this discovery is the fact that from the outside it is not possible to see this difference between other plants and the spider flower and that its behaviour in the long term will determine the death of the fungi and an alteration of the system of which they are part (www.mycologia.org). The comparison, notwithstanding difference, with the relationship between the Lega/*Arachnitis* and the immigrants/fungi is clear enough and needs no further explanation. What should be remarked upon here are two main concepts: firstly, that the League's attitude in the long term could determine an implosion of a system where immigrants are needed but only partially/temporally recognised in the work sector, and do not have civil rights or visibility in the social sphere apart from being associated with episodes of criminality. Secondly, that despite the constant reference to immigrants as parasites seeking to

exploit resources that they did not contribute to create, a deeper analysis of the productive role of foreigners might prove this interpretation wrong, as shown by the Caritas/Migrantes document cited above, according to which immigrants' contribution to Italian internal revenue (*gettito fiscale*) (3,1 billion Euros) largely overcomes what the state spends for them (Caritas Migrantes, 2008).

Leaving aside the links between the national economy and the immigrants' impact on it, this analysis helps to explain what model of state the League is implicitly or explicitly putting forward in reaction to the newly arrived. First of all, it can be said that the party is the only political actor which directly refers to classical models developed in other countries to deal with 'otherness'. Albeit mentioned in dismissive terms, multiculturalism and the experience of the UK in dealing with immigration are used as a term of comparison, a point of reference in order to outline an alternative model of state and a different definition of citizenship. The Church also referred to a vague and dangerous multiculturalism even though its rhetoric in this sense remains general and does not touch upon specific countries, a choice probably justified by its transnational interests and claimed universality, which require more attention to diplomacy. I define the model put forward by the League as an alternative to a multiculturalism destined to fail as an 'institutionalised state of exception', which means a state under permanent 'exceptional' circumstances related to an internal crisis and to an external threat. The expression clearly represents a contradiction in terms, since to make an exception means 'to not treat someone or something according to the usual rules' (Cambridge advanced learners' dictionary, 3rd edition). Clearly if the exception is permanent, it becomes the rule, hence the logical gap: in this way the perceived internal and external challenges, turned into reality by the definition of them provided by political actors, media and public opinion, are exploited to turn exceptional, *una tantum*, reversible measures put forward to deal with

immigration into 'normality'. This model of state is based on a hybrid between an identitarian and a repressive/legalitarian approach to otherness. On the one hand, a 'strong identitarianism' is based on the fear that 'the presence of immigrants will alter the national culture and may consequently pursue a strategy of limiting and screening immigration flows and citizenship, with a strong preference for immigrants of national origins or [...] culturally omogeneous', an attitude that often leads to xenophobic and racist positions (Zincone, 2006: 5). On the other hand, the legalitarian approach aims mainly to 'suppress crime and terrorism by the immigrants', a position in theory shared by all parties, with different degrees of tolerance of crimes, and in the case of the League with a 'zero tolerance' level (Ibid.). This model of state implies the subscription to a unidirectional social contract, which demands a complete fulfilment of requirements and commitment to determined values on the part of immigrants and a strict respect of a set of duties. At the same time immigrants have no access to civil rights and to resources, from visibility in the public sphere to freedom of religion and expression to the vote and down to accommodation, welfare system and safe work conditions.

In the classic definitions provided by thinkers such as Hobbes and Locke, the social contract is based on the balance between what the individual loses (part of his freedom) and what he gains (mainly protection). In the model outlined by Locke, the citizen has the right to withdraw from the contract (by killing the sovereign) when the state does not fulfil its role and cannot guarantee three main rights: property, freedom and security (Locke, 1651, ed.2009). The immigrant does not have such rights, because by signing the contract s/he is simply agreeing to fulfil a set of duties but is not being granted any right apart from being temporarily allowed to enter the country. The type of state developed by the League resembles more Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1690, ed.1988) in the principle that there cannot be any sort of rebellion against the sovereign: the 'citizen' cannot be freed from his status of

subjection, since the king cannot do any wrong. He is the law and his actions set the rule: by acting he provides definitions of what is right and what is wrong. Applying this paradigm to the 'state of exception' what is interesting is the fact that the permanent state of threat and emergency allows the sovereign to change the rules without warning and suddenly if necessary, whenever citizens' security is perceived as at risk. In this sense, the immigrant confirms his position as an outsider: since he is not a citizen, the state does not have the duty to protect him.

10. Conclusion

The analysis conducted until this point showed what model of state the Northern League has put forward in its attempts to react to immigration. It also explained how the position of the party on the matter has shifted since the invention of Padania and how increasingly strict it has become recently. Several interesting changes have occurred since the early days of the party. Firstly, the aggressive rhetoric directed at Southerners and the central state has faded leaving room for the invective against the new enemy: the 'extracomunitario'. Until the creation of the new nation, the so-called 'terroni' represented the main 'problem' for the North in terms of allocation of resources that should be distributed to *Padani* in the first place, and in terms of a not desired 'multiethnic state' in which they represented the 'other'. By exploiting the 'difficult' coexistence of different ideas of the good life, crystallised in fixed dichotomies (clean-dirty, hard working-lazy, etc.), the League aimed at achieving independence or some degree of autonomy from Rome. Padanians were portrayed as victims on whom Fascism had imposed a 'fake' national identity, which did not respect their ethnic and cultural diversity. Europe was seen as a role model to whom the new nation aspired to belong and under which it hoped

to see its independence recognised and protected. In terms of shared values and economic perspectives Europe was much closer to Padania than Italy. Southern immigrants within the territory were confined to the lower rung of the social ladder, perceived as difficult to integrate and therefore isolated albeit somehow included *de facto*.

Since the invention of Padania and following the increasing relevance of foreign arrivals in the public debate, the League started using a catastrophist rhetoric in order to create the new enemy, a mechanism intensified by a feared Muslim 'invasion'. It can be said that the Southerners' integration (albeit not complete) has improved since this shift of focus on the part of the League, which brought about a new definition of national identity that for the first time referred to the old nation and shared Christian values. As shown in the section on the relationship between the League and the Church, this was quite a dramatic change in strategy. Immigrants who are allowed to enter the country are segregated in the bottom level of society and do not have guarantees that they will be able to remain 'in'. They have no civil rights and no voice in the public sphere but are necessary for two reasons: firstly because they are much needed in the work sector and secondly because the party still needs a 'scapegoat' to fuel its political action. However, their presence, visible only in circumstances that link them to criminality, is a revocable concession rather than a right, a condition that turns them into 'homines sacri'. Illegal immigrants, but often also regular immigrants, are confined to an external orbit from which they can gain no access to the country: these are the generic 'extracomunitari', Roma, Albanians, and mainly Muslims. There is no space for these foreigners, who are essentially portrayed as carrying a fixed identity attributed to all members of that particular ethnic or religious background. The most 'revolutionary' change in this new model is that the borders of Padania have come to coincide with those of Italy: the old internal division seems to have been forgotten in the name of the

need to make the issue of immigration and the perceived threat relevant at a national level. In this sense the party takes a path already taken by the Church in presenting Italian national identity and Christian values as coinciding and, therefore, as both under attack. As a result, all Italians, no matter whether Northerners or Southerners, are supposed to share the same anxiety towards the new arrivals and are called to form a united front in order to 'save' their common identity and a shared territory. In the case of the Northern League this strategy could also be justified by the attempt to gain support in areas of the country where it had not had electoral success.

The League, as much as the Catholic Church, uses as a means to convey its message, a rhetoric based on victimhood, following the process described above, according to which transferring the blame onto the victims contributes to legitimising and making more objective a subjective and arbitrary 'definition' of the situation. The two political actors have developed original interpretations of the concept of solidarity that to a certain extent overlap: if the Church puts forward a 'selective solidarity', only directed at those perceived as holding similar values or as easier to assimilate, thus excluding mainly the Muslims, the League's approach invokes a long-distance solidarity aimed at helping people as long as they stay in their own country. Both powers consider helping first their own people as the more adequate criterion to discriminate between those who can be 'saved' or granted temporary entrance and those who will be 'condemned' or 'permanently excluded' (in both cases represented by Muslims). Emphasising the main difference between the Church's and the League's attitude in this respect can help to explain better the models they outline. If in the paternalistic theocratic state developed by the Church everybody can theoretically and potentially become 'a member of the family' as long as they give up their religious identity and embrace Catholicism, in the case of the League such access does not depend on the willingness of the immigrants to accept and recognise

different values, including the mainstream religion. On the one hand, by erasing their past and accepting to be enlightened by the truth, immigrants can be recognised by the Church as equal and become automatically Italian. On the other hand, in the case of the Lega, as mentioned above, immigrants' will to integrate, to subscribe to a different set of values and forget their origins, is not enough for them to be granted access. Their exclusion is decided at birth, particularly if they come from countries or religious backgrounds perceived as intrinsically adverse to the West. Moreover, while it can be said that, albeit extremely strict, the assimilation rule imposed by the Church is crystal clear, the same cannot be said of the political party, since, as already stated, the complete lack of regulation is the result of a permanent state of exception, which means chaos and impossibility for the outsider to take action in order to integrate.

This thesis argues that the Northern League's political discourse on immigration and the position of the Church have a dramatically strong influence both in legitimising the state's exclusionary and restrictive policing making and in shaping a public opinion which welcomes and demands such measures. Despite their being moved by different concerns and aiming at different goals, the similar strategy and the common rhetoric used by these political actors and the united front they create contribute to reinforcing their position vis-à-vis a state which cannot ignore their requests, particularly when they have shaped an interpretation of the situation accepted by the public as 'real'.

Chapter IV

The Italian legislation on immigration

1. Introduction

Public debates on immigration have emerged in many Western European countries since the 1950s and have influenced domestic policies and integration models. Italy has been affected by similar debates considerably later, for historical and political reasons addressed in the introduction and in the second chapter of this thesis. The development of the legislation aimed at regulating the phenomenon followed a similar path, being formulated at different stages only since the late 1980s. Before then, given the general attitude towards immigration, perceived as somewhat non-problematic by both the political class and public opinion, Italy relied on pre-existent Fascist laws to regulate the phenomenon. At the same time, the on-going discussion on national identity among intellectuals and in the media, based on a reinterpretation of the history of the country, ignored the growing number of arrivals until as late as the early 1990s or at least did not consider them as an issue linked to the need for a renewed sense of belonging.

Until the late 1980s, Italian legislation on immigration was mainly characterised by occasional ad hoc measures aimed at regulating the job market in a protectionist way. From the 1960s to the late 1980s, when Italy began to become aware of its transformation from a country of emigration into a country of immigration, the country lacked a long term vision and a unidirectional and coherent approach to the phenomenon. Through the analysis of the history and the development of the Italian legislation on immigration, this chapter will argue that to a certain extent this is still the case today. It will show how the discussion shifted from the perception of the other as ‘picturesque’ and in need of help towards an interpretation of the foreigner as a threat for the culture and security of the nation and how this turn is

reflected in the state's reaction to the phenomenon. At a time when immigration is increasingly portrayed as causing clash of civilisations, symbols such as the crucifix have become emblematic of a war of values, and there is growing talk of an 'invasion' of foreign people intentioned to conquer Italy, this chapter will provide an account of the transition from a generic disposition to welcome the newcomers to an institutionalised and often bipartisan emphasis upon exclusion. Taking into account the economic and social changes which have occurred in the last three decades, as well as the political discourse on immigration, this chapter will analyse the Italian legislation, the institutions and political actors responsible for the various laws and finally the more restrictive policies put forward by parties such as the Northern League, as part of what will be defined as a 'simulative' type of politics. The constraints imposed by the European Union and communitarian laws as well as the open criticism of supranational institutions towards the Italian approach to the issue will also be considered.

Starting with the polemics on the subject between centre-right and centre-left coalitions, broadly illustrated in the previous chapter, this chapter will also aim to explain the role of many social groups, which have contributed to containing and limiting the impact of strong ideological positions on the actual making of the laws. It will account for the apparent lack of noticeable differences in the measures passed by different governments until 2008 and the consequent general tendency to focus on protecting the borders rather than promoting integration. In addressing the question of whether Italy is following any existing model in dealing with immigration or whether it is on the contrary elaborating an original interpretation and solution, this chapter will argue that the legislation to date reflects the same lack of long term-strategy and strong ideological orientation already encountered in the analysis of the positions adopted by different political actors. The formulation and enforcement of the selected measures will be contextualised by addressing the various social, economic and cultural changes as

well as the different migratory waves that have occurred in the period of time under scrutiny. Finally, the chapter will assess the influence of the solutions put forward by the Church and the League upon the policies introduced and implemented by the various governments. The analysis will take into account four possible hypothesis: 1) the laws increasingly reflect the model of integration put forward by the Northern League; 2) the laws fit into the model suggested by the Church; 3) the laws represent a combination of the two models or, rather, 4) they express a complete lack of strategic vision and do not form a coherent model but are on the contrary ad hoc measures emerging as responses to specific and temporary emergencies.

2. The pre-1990s legislation: ‘immigration without politics’

The first significant, albeit limited in numbers, migratory wave to Italy started in the aftermath of WWII, when groups of foreign students reached the main university cities in search of a better education. Until the late 1960s however, they arrived mainly from richer European countries such as France, Britain, Switzerland and Germany, while, after 1967, the year of the Greek colonels’ coup d’état, the number of Greek and Iranian students started to grow, reaching its peak in 1981-2, when foreign students registered at Italian universities amounted to 113,000. The following two decades were characterised by a steady decline in the foreign presence, with 30,790 permits to study in Italy in 2001-2. Such downturn is mainly due to the recurrent regularisation of irregular immigrants from the late 1980s, which provided an alternative to the requests for study visas. Moreover, in 1990 the Martelli law made it possible to convert a study permit into a work permit and allowed students aged 14 to 18 to join their parents who worked in Italy (Einaudi, 2007:85).

The second migratory wave consisted in the arrival in the 1960s of women employed in the domestic sector, mainly emigrating from the ex-colonies and from Catholic countries. Recruited by Catholic associations or agencies which acted as mediators, they tended to arrive with regular permits or with tourism visas and seek regularisation once in the country. Perceived as less visible than the men and somehow less dangerous, they represented the ‘invisible’ immigrants and faced difficult working conditions due to a lack of regulation of the domestic sector. The economic boom of those years and the weakness of the welfare state contributed to an increase in the request for this type of work as well as in the applications to regularise those already employed but still irregular (Einaudi, 2007: 86; Andall, 2000).

If the presence of the ‘badanti’ never raised concern (and even today is considered deeply different from the arrival of male immigrants) and went almost unnoticed, a different reaction was directed towards Tunisian workers who, since the 1970s, have travelled to Eastern Sicily to work as fishermen, farmers and builders, and immediately accused of being dangerous for the public order and targeted by spontaneous anti-immigrant groups who demanded their expulsion (Einaudi, 2007: 86-87). The fourth and last pre-1990s migratory wave took place between 1961 and 1989 and was mainly directed at the industrial sector. It became ‘recognised’ or problematic (albeit not systematically addressed) in the late 1970s, when growing unemployment (with peaks of 10.3% in the South) started causing a general resentment towards the newly arrived. This particular wave of arrivals triggered the debate on ‘competition’ and ‘complementarity’ in the work sector: for the first time the discussion revolved around whether these immigrants were stealing the jobs of the locals or were rather taking up jobs that the locals refused to do, as can be proved by an analysis of the newspapers of the time (Einaudi, 2007: 87-89).

If until 1989 it was still possible to monitor the numbers and identify the nationalities of the newly arrived, since the early 1990s this has become rather difficult if not impossible, as illegal immigration grew while the presence of foreign workers increased in almost all sectors of the Italian economy, following events such as the fall of the Berlin wall, the conflict in Yugoslavia and the Albanian crises. The number of visas increased dramatically in concomitance with the so-called ‘sanatorie’, *una tantum* measures employed to regularise illegal migrants in 1986, 1990 and later in 1995, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2008, determining a lower presence of irregular stays. By then the rise of the Northern League and the exacerbation of the discussion on the issue had contributed to place immigration at centre stage in the political debate.

Interestingly, the first measure to regulate the incoming flux was put forward by the Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Labour and Social Security), which, acting as the Ministry of Interior (Home Office), indirectly established the first guidelines of a migratory policy. The ministerial memorandum No. 51 of 4 December 1963 introduced for the first time the link between legal entry into the country and possession of a valid work contract, stating that only those previously authorised by the Upl (Ufficio provinciale del lavoro) to work in Italy could apply for a visa. Such employment could only be granted to foreigners after ascertaining that there were no Italians ready or qualified to take that job. These job permits could be renewed for a maximum of twelve months while the right to live in the country could be revoked if the contract expired or ceased (Bonini, 1987: 105; Einaudi, 2007: 99). This ‘circolare’, regularly neglected in the debates on the legislation on immigration, is particularly interesting when compared to the so-called Bossi-Fini law of 2000, bitterly criticised by the Left and often perceived as a dramatic U-turn in policy-making. A comparison between the two laws, which will be analysed in due course together with the most recent one, will highlight the fact that the ‘protectionist’ approach, centred on the regulation of the work

sector, has always featured in the Italian response to immigration. The main consequence of this particular law was that of confining an important part of the labour force to a situation of illegality, whether that means workers entering the country illegally, finding a job and then pretending to apply for one from abroad or simply immigrants being recruited to work in the black economy.

The formulation and implementation of this 1963 measure was not preceded or accompanied by a political or cultural debate on immigration, but rather represented an attempt to control the job market as well as a response to the first manifestations of intolerance on the part of Italian workers. Often such tensions resulted in the expulsion of the so-called ‘falso turista’ (fake tourist) which reached an average of 50 per week in 1972 (Einaudi, 2007:102). Soon after this first partial measure, immigration began to be tackled (yet again indirectly) through a series of measures discussed and passed between 1973 and 1990 aimed at making it more and more difficult for foreign students to apply to Italian universities, a trend broken only in 1998 with the Turco-Napolitano law, which removed some of the obstacles erected by the previous laws (Musaragno, 2001; Einaudi, 2007:105). The main consequence of this repressive trend (with the only exception of the women working in the domestic sector who regularly benefitted from *ad hoc* measures since the first *sanatoria* of 17 December 1979) was that the new waves of immigrants were destined to remain illegal, particularly after the block of entries in 1982 (Einaudi, 2007: 108; Horniziel, 1990: 110).

In this first phase characterised by attempted reforms, mainly aimed at protecting the internal job market while strengthening the economy, immigration was somehow depoliticised or not yet seen as relevant at a national level: it was, following Einaudi’s definition, an ‘immigration without politics’ (Einaudi, 2007). During this period, trade unions and Catholic associations, such as Caritas, acted as an emergency replacement for an inexistent

welfare state and provided immigrants with both material aid and moral support. Leaving aside the specific interests behind the role played by the unions, what matters here is the fact that these two actors contributed to highlight the need for a Parliamentary discussion on immigration and for a more consistent normative approach on the issue. Following this pressure, in 1978, Andreotti's government commissioned an inquiry into the state of immigration, which resulted in the first official data collection carried out by the 'Comitato interministeriale per l'emigrazione' (Interministerial Committee for Emigration). The first practical outcome of the investigation was law No. 943 of 30 December 1986, authored by Christian Democratic MP Franco Foschi, at the time also secretary of the Committee. In the eight years which passed between the publication of the report and the approval of the law, many measures were discussed in Parliament although none of them ever made it onto the statute books. It can be said that these, generally restrictive, laws by decree proposed during this period were formulated mainly in order to foster the economy, a mechanism that makes sense only when considering that at that point immigration was seen as dangerous for economic growth, whereas feelings of anxiety in relation to a supposed clash of values had not yet emerged. This interpretation appears paradoxical, considering that nowadays immigration, albeit much needed to make the Italian economy more competitive, is considered a threat mainly in 'cultural' terms (Cento Bull, 2009; Andall, 2009). The following two quotations are representative of the pre-1990s occasional debate on the issue, showing, on the one hand, a concern with the impact of new arrivals in the job market and, on the other hand, a much stronger solidarity with the immigrants as human beings:

L'Italia non ha alcuna intenzione di diventare un paese di immigrazione. In quest'ottica e non essendo in grado di sopportare i costi economici e sociali che comporta nel lungo periodo l'accoglimento di un numero elevato di lavoratori stranieri, l'Italia

non intende basare il proprio sviluppo economico sull'importazione di manodopera straniera

L'Italia ha una tradizione umanitaria degna della sua civiltà: porte spalancate a chi viene da noi per cercare libertà e sfuggire a persecuzioni o a costretta clandestinità, e uguale comprensione per chi, malgrado queste stagioni povere di lavoro e di attività, viene per lavorare onestamente e inserirsi in una realtà sociale che ritiene valida (Statement by Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1983, cited in Bonini, 1987: 81; Einaudi, 2007: 119).

These quotations are illustrative of the attitude of considering immigration as problematic only with regards to the job market ('queste stagioni povere di lavoro') and helps to explain why the first measures dealing with the subject were mainly if not exclusively directed towards the protection of Italian workers, while at the same time showing a high degree of sympathy for the immigrants as human beings.

The international agreements on immigration subscribed to by Italy were also centered on the treatment and the rights of the foreign labour force, as outlined for instance in the ILO convention (No. 143) signed in Geneva on 4 June 1970. This was the last of a series of international agreements establishing the basic human rights and working conditions for foreigners employed in Italy. Article 10 contains the most relevant principle, which reads:

Ogni Membro per il quale la convenzione sia in vigore s'impegna a formulare e ad attuare una politica nazionale diretta a promuovere e garantire, con metodi adatti alle circostanze ed agli usi nazionali, la parità di opportunità e di trattamento in materia di occupazione e di professione, di sicurezza sociale, di diritti sindacali e culturali, nonché di libertà individuali e collettive per le persone che, in quanto lavoratori migranti o familiari degli stessi, si trovino legalmente sul suo territorio.

The convention also provided a definition of the term ‘migrant worker’ as: ‘una persona che emigra o è emigrata da un paese all’altro, in vista di occupazione altrimenti che in proprio conto: esso ammette qualsiasi persona ammessa regolarmente in qualità di lavoratore migrante’ (Article 11).

The definition of the migrant exclusively as a worker, dominant in the pre-1990s Italian debate, somehow derived from the Marxist idea, previously discussed in this work, according to which immigrants are part of the international proletariat, whose members are citizens of the world, united by their common condition as workers. Similar in its conclusion was the interpretation of the Catholic subculture, expressed by the slogan ‘Nessuno è straniero nel mio Paese’, which looked at the phenomenon from the perspective of the receiving countries. Two are the interesting factors here: firstly the Church’s position, at least for what emerged from the analysis carried out in the previous chapter, has shifted to such an extent that the more recent position is summarised in the recurrent motto according to which ‘Nessuno è straniero nella Chiesa’. Secondly, that despite their deep antagonism, the Marxist and the Catholic subcultures shared at that point a similar will to welcome immigrants, a position based upon the idea that being workers in the first instance and simply human beings in the second instance were the essential and only requirements to be fulfilled in order to be integrated.

The fact that until the late 1980s the main political actors involved in a new born discussion on immigration were international organisations (as the ‘Organizzazione internazionale dei lavoratori’) and national interests groups, such as the unions and the Catholic voluntary associations, sheds some light on the reason why, until the Martelli law (1990), the proposed measures did not contain any reference to security, law and order or any reference to restrictions and sanctions for illegal immigrants. Before asking what had changed in the late 1990s and what

therefore determined the development of an increasingly ‘punitive’ legislation, it is worth looking briefly at the 1986 law (No. 943) mentioned earlier. Its first article confirms the principles of the ILO convention, stating that the Italian Republic grants all ‘extracomunitari’ (this is the first time the word appears in an official document) an equal treatment and the same opportunities given to Italian workers. Moreover, it guarantees access to social services, education and housing while remarking also upon the immigrants’ ‘diritto di mantenere la propria identità culturale’. However, more than a sign of openness and good will, this first article has to be read as an acceptance of the international agreements as well as a sign that immigration was not yet perceived as a threat, whereas the focus of the law is once again the labour sector. Indeed, the main corpus of the law is centered on the formulation of even more detailed rules regulating the relationship between employers and foreign workers: monthly updated lists of workers, the impossibility for employers to employ a worker who is not at the top of such lists and, even more importantly, monthly investigations to ascertain the lack of availability of Italians for those jobs. The main clause in favour of immigrants is the possibility to join a family member regularly employed in the country and the permission for their relatives arriving in Italy to start work themselves after a year of residence. Moreover, the law considers the case of female immigrants working in the domestic sector with greater flexibility since the employers are allowed to put forward a ‘richiesta nominativa’, that is to say, to indicate a specific person rather than having to give employment to the first person on the official list. However, as Einaudi puts it,

La legge era [...] basata su una concezione semplicistica del mercato del lavoro degli immigrati ma anche su meccanismi troppo complessi. Ignorava il lavoro autonomo e ambulante, come pure la richiesta di assumere con richieste nominative individui conosciuti personalmente e non con numeri e facce pescate a caso. Si scontrava anche con il grande problema dell’economia italiana

delle migrazioni, che né la legge 943/1986 né alcuna delle leggi successive riuscirono a risolvere: quello del ruolo determinante dell'economia sommersa nel fornire occupazione agli stranieri senza fornire le basi legali per ottenere il permesso di soggiorno (Einaudi, 2007: 130).

As stated above, at the time of the implementation of the first law on immigration the phenomenon was still perceived by the political system and public opinion as temporary and the newly arrived were believed to be aiming at reaching other countries (Melotti, 1996). However, in 1973, with the oil crisis, it became clear that the expansion of the service sector and the more restrictive policies adopted by European countries that had traditionally encouraged immigration had determined a considerable rise in the numbers of migrants who had chosen Italy. This new trend turned the migratory balance within the country to positive for the first time: Italy was at that point more a country of immigration than one of emigration, as it had traditionally been since Unification. Not only were European migrants oriented towards Italy as their definitive destination, but for the first time they arrived in considerable numbers from developing countries, pushed by demographic, economical and political factors (Golini and Bonifazi, 1987). This new typology of arrivals was following a general tide of migrants travelling from the East to the West and from the South to North of the world (Ferrera, 1996). Nonetheless, Italians did not react openly to immigration, despite the fact that the arrivals grew constantly, an attitude of openness or probably denial that later triggered internal contradictions or unexpected turns, such as episodes of racism (Paci, 1987) that will be analysed later on in this chapter.

The change in the migration pattern, from a situation in which all arrivals could be interpreted as linked to a search for a job, to one in which immigrants arrived in Italy for all sorts of different reasons, moved not only by push factors but also by pull factors,

was not addressed through new legislation and nor were its consequences addressed in terms of the role of illegal immigrants in the black economy (Bonifazi, 1992; Mughini, 2002). Even though the pressure from independent pro-immigrant associations contributed to the development of a relatively welcoming legislation, at least in the intentions of those who proposed such measures, the fact that the issue of immigration was approached exclusively from the perspective of the employers and immigrants considered merely as workers set a fertile ground for the approval, years later, of restrictive measures which did not encourage a process of integration and on the contrary justified exclusionary social attitudes (Zincone, 2003).

3. The 1990s

Until the late 1980s, Italy went through a phase of economical and political stability and even though the crisis ('*mani pulite*' investigation, the end of the First Republic, institutional collapse and social unrest) was around the corner, it had not yet manifested itself. It is in this still pacified political climate, occasionally shaken by sporadic yet unexpected racist attacks, that a new law was formulated by the Minister of Justice Claudio Martelli. Law 39/1990 represents the first structural measure to deal with the phenomenon in a broader sense than just in terms of its impact on the economy and on the job market. The episode which catapulted the issue of immigration onto the newspapers' front pages was the assassination of Jerry Masslo in Villa Literno during the summer of 1989. South-African refugee Masslo and his fellow co-workers were allegedly assaulted by robbers intentioned to steal the money they had saved and that they used to keep at home (Magni, 1995: 41, Einaudi, 2007: 141). The death of the refugee, which followed some other similar episodes in the Neapolitan area, was interpreted as a racist raid and immediately became the symbol of a political world incapable of dealing with immigration. Anti-racist mass

demonstrations were organised during the following days while public opinion, led by non-political organizations, started to demand a Parliamentary discussion of a new law (Einaudi, 2007: 142).

The struggle against racism dominated the 1980s, reaching such an intensity in the political rhetoric that it was defined by scholars and opinion makers as ‘anti-razzismo facile’, or ‘conformismo culturale e politico’ as Balbo defined it, resulting from dogmatism and a refusal to understand in depth the phenomenon on the part of political parties and Catholic associations, accused of turning the leftist traditional solidarity towards immigrants into an intolerant refusal to address the issue in rational terms (Einaudi, 2007, Sciortino, 1998). The criticism according to which such an anti-racist stance was the product of dogmatic ideologies, to a certain extent contributed to delegitimize the position of the pro-immigrant groups, making them less influential while creating a conflict within the centre-left political coalition. This became particularly acute when criticisms were expressed by intellectuals such as Balbo and Manconi, who had previously founded the first anti-racist groups in Italy. By being criticised for their unconditional will to open the doors to all immigrants, non-political actors lost legitimacy and therefore influence on the process of decision-making in the following years, as their position was discarded for being inapplicable or simply unrealistic.

The aims of the Martelli law were the following: the regularisation of illegal immigrants through a new ‘sanatoria’; the refusal to consider the country of origin as a criterion to grant a visa; the need for equal treatment and access to housing, jobs, healthcare, education for the immigrants; stronger support for the professional development of immigrants willing to work in the industry sector; the approval of new guidelines for the census of foreigners and migrant communities within the country; the creation of an ‘osservatorio sull’immigrazione’ (at the time Italy

only had an 'osservatorio dell'emigrazione'). The proposal, supported by the PCI (Italian Communist Party) and Verdi (Green Party), seemed to many quite unbalanced insofar as it responded only to the requests of the immigrants and the associations behind them (Melotti, 2004). The unconditional solidarity underlying Martelli's approach was not only justified by the general will of the Left to integrate immigrants and by the anti-racist stance mentioned above, but also resulted from a comparison with other European countries such as France, seen as the epicentre of the new immigration. Looking at France led to an underestimation of the phenomenon by a considerably large part of the political world, not only on the Left but also important representatives of the DC, such as the Minister of Labour Carlo Donat-Cattin, who supported Martelli and actually demanded the opening of Italian borders and the possibility for immigrants holding only tourists visas to work in the country (Zincone, 2003; Einaudi, 2007: 144).

The 1990s, however, were also the years in which a debate on security and growing concerns linked to law and order started to emerge. New political parties and in particular the Northern League were rising to power and becoming recognised at a national level. Albeit not primarily concerned with immigration, at least not to the extent it is today, Bossi's party was certainly not in favour of an unregulated immigration. Other more traditional parties were undertaking structural changes which influenced their attitude towards immigration, as for instance in the case of the MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano). In 1993 Gianfranco Fini founded Alleanza Nazionale: the party had a relatively flexible position on immigration but it also drew a clear distinction between legal and illegal immigrants. While it agreed on the need to guarantee to the first group basic human rights, it adopted a much firmer line with the illegal migrants who, according to the leader's speech given at the 1995 Fiuggi Congress, had to be expelled immediately (Fini, 1995). According to political commentators, in choosing to be 'garantista' for those who had entered the country with a regular

visa, Fini was publicly trying to take a distance from the extreme position held by the MSI, so as to avoid being perceived as racist and losing the legitimisation and credibility so much needed by his new-born party (Einaudi, 2007). However, all the smaller parties of the extreme Right opposed the draft of the law presented by Martelli or tried to modify a substantial number of its articles. The amendments put forward by the MSI and the Northern League were generally considered racist and therefore rejected, while those suggested by the PRI (Partito Repubblicano Italiano) (in the first instance also hostile to the law) were implemented. In particular, the Republicans managed to add to the text the need for a rational planning of the arrivals, whereas the original law was more generous in not setting quotas (Campani, 1993). Moreover, they insisted on the need for work permits and rejected the idea of allowing foreigners in possession of tourist visas to be employed. After various negotiations, the law that was approved was quite different from the original proposal, especially as far as the measures of ‘accompagnamento’ to the borders or expulsion. Despite the fact that the rules on expulsion were hard to implement and indeed immigrants were rarely sent back to their countries (due to lack of resources and the impossibility to identify them), Martelli’s position shifted during this process of negotiation to the extent that towards the end he openly invoked the help of the police force in order to deal with the new (unexpected?) migratory waves (Einaudi, 2007: 161). Eventually, the law left unsatisfied all the actors that had tried to influence its formulation: it created internal conflict within the Left, with the more radical groups arguing that it was too restrictive, as it limited the number of residence permits (Pugliese, 2002) and neglected the concept of integration entirely (Einaudi, 2007). The opposition was also very critical of the law particularly since the Northern League’s suggestion of introducing the ‘reato di clandestinità’ was not taken on board. It will take the party almost two decades to turn such a measure into part of an official law, the so-called ‘pacchetto sicurezza’ (security package)

passed in 2008. Nonetheless, albeit contradictory and limited by internal divisions and by the external pressure of international agreements such as Schengen, which Italy joined in 1990, the Martelli law represents the first structured attempt to regulate immigration without considering migrants solely as workers.

Immediately after the law was approved, Italy faced the consequences of the Albanian crisis, which manifested itself with two unprecedented waves of arrivals in 1990 and 1991. The inadequacy of Italian institutions to respond to a situation of 'emergency' led to the appointment of the first (and last in Italian history) Minister for Immigration. Socialist MP Margherita Boniver was nominated by the Andreotti government on 12 April 1991. While many Albanians were sent back to their country and others were rejected when still in international waters, the arrival in Bari of the ship Bora in August 1991 was destined to feature in national and international newspapers and to remain as an example of Italian xenophobia. The Bora had transported 10-12,000 people turning the image of the crowded boat into an icon of the 'invasion' of the country by foreigners. For the first time the nature of the phenomenon appeared in its dramatic reality. The common reaction was one of incredulity: the arrival of the Bora can be considered the watershed which divides the era of solidarity from the era of fear. The images linked to this particular group of immigrants and the boats which transported them became iconic in the Northern League's representation of 'an unsustainable and threatening invasion', a concern shared by most Centre-Right parties. That fact that this 'landing' was so unexpected (or so it was portrayed) contributed to shock public opinion, a feeling explained by Palomba and Righi (1992: 1) in their 'Quel giorno che gli Albanesi invasero l'Italia', where the expression 'quel giorno' (that day) conveys both the suddenness and the irreversibility of an unforeseen event. The arrival of the Bora to the Italian coast became symbolic not only of the sudden mass-arrival but also of Italian's xenophobia, while the pictures of the immigrants left for

days in Bari's football stadium were being published in international newspapers around the world.

In the following years, the number of arrivals dropped consistently, while Italy tried to negotiate an agreement with Albania, training its police force to patrol the coasts while building infrastructures in and around Tirana and sending aid to the local population. However the so-called 'sindrome da assedio', reinforced by the mass-media and the political discourse of the Right, had already spread across the country and awakened an until then disinterested public opinion (Macioti and Pugliese, 1993: 203; Einaudi, 2007: 181).

After the political turmoil of 1992 and the disappearance of the traditional parties, the Ministry of Immigration was closed. However, several proposals for new measures were put forward, although many of them were never passed. These proposals were mainly focused on fighting racism, as in the case of Mancini's law 205/1993, entitled 'Misure urgenti in materia di discriminazione razziale, etnica e religiosa'. This measure, aimed at fighting crimes linked to racial, ethnic and religious hatred, established that 'chi diffonde in qualsiasi modo idee fondate sulla superiorità o sull'odio razziale o etnico, ovvero incita a commettere o commette atti di discriminazione per motivi razziali, etnici, nazionali o religiosi' can be sentenced to up to three years in custody, a period that can be increased to four years for anyone who 'in qualsiasi modo incita a commettere o commette violenza o atti di provocazione alla violenza per motivi razziali, etnici, nazionali o religiosi'. (Article 1, comma 1a and 1b). It also forbids the creation of groups or organisations which have among their aims that of incitement to racial discrimination or violence, punishable with disciplinary actions that range from the exclusion from electoral competition to up to six years in jail (Article 1, comma 2d). This law, albeit very much needed to contrast a growing number of racist attacks, shows how the focus of the debate was once again the racism of Italians,

whereas immigration *per se* had not yet become relevant in the political rhetoric of that time.

This law was bitterly opposed by the Northern League, which saw it as a limit to its members' freedom of expression and therefore fought to abolish it, achieving this goal in 2006. Many of the decrees formulated between 1991 and 1998 never became laws since the political instability of that time made most governments fall before the texts had been approved (Einaudi, 2007: 183). Berlusconi's government did not have enough time to approve a reform but it did express itself with regard to immigration with a draft proposal heavily influenced by AN. The proposal advocated giving more power to the police and introducing the crime of illegal entry as well as punishing illegal immigrants with several years in jail. The fact that associations and lobbies involved in the discussion managed once again to boycott the law, should be interpreted as a lack of interest in the subject on the part of political parties, which tended not to hold a clear position on the matter, rather than a sign of strength on the part of these organisations (Ibid.). The Northern League itself did not get particularly involved in the discussion: not only was immigration not its first interest until the late 1990s, but it was also still trying to gain national visibility and legitimisation. Berlusconi expressed a negative opinion on the idea of punishing the immigrants for illegal permanence in the country, since at that time it was a shared opinion that somebody should be sent to jail only if s/he had committed a crime or represented a danger for society (Einaudi, 2007: 185, 201).

In 1995, the approach adopted by the technocratic government led by Lamberto Dini to of immigration was aimed instead at giving clandestines a legal status, so as to reduce the number of undocumented workers and break the link with the black economy (Reyneri, 1999). The results of the 'sanatoria' (the *una tantum* measure to regularise those residing in the country illegally) in the

Martelli law were also the object of a controversy: the limited number of illegal immigrants who decided to come forward and be regularised was interpreted by some political actors (usually supporters of the measure) as a sign that there were not many illegal foreigners in the country, an interpretation that clearly neglected the fact that many could not afford the cost of social contributions needed to become official, while staying illegally employed was more convenient and often the only choice (Katrourgalos and Lazaridis, 2003: 167-190). The fact that the necessary procedures for regularisation were not very clear (a constant factor in the Italian legislation on immigration) and that official information was not made easily accessible to applicants by the institutions in charge also contributed to this failure. A failure that, according to various commentators, originated not only from the inability to discourage illegal entry in the country, but also from the lack of attention paid to promoting integration (Zincone, 2003).

Since 1995 the political debate on immigration became more and more heated, although the two coalitions were not homogeneous in their responses: while the position of the Northern League started to become clear and exacerbate the debate with provocative statements and claims, Berlusconi was far less supportive of punitive policies. At the same time the Left was also divided between the most radical pro-immigrant interventionists (Radicals and PRC) and leaders such as D'Alema (DS) who seemed more worried about the reaction of the workers living in the big cities, who, in his view, were more exposed to security issues and therefore more in need of protection. Citizens' fears featured in the front page of newspapers and magazines, which arguably contributed to consolidate and increase the same fears with a series of recurrent references to crimes committed by immigrants (Colombo, 1997).

4. The Turco-Napolitano law: a humanitarian and solidarist perspective

After winning the 1996 elections Prodi's government seemed to be oriented towards the introduction of an encompassing and more articulated legislation that would replace the previous partial laws. This will to revise the legislation came from an acknowledged need for a law that would not simply solve problems of times of emergencies, but would also reflect the fact that the arrivals were not going to diminish in the foreseeable future. Moreover, a modification of the previous law was seen as necessary in order to reassure other EU countries, such as France and Germany, that Italy would meet the Schengen criteria for border control (to be achieved by 1997) and would not become the open gate to Europe (Zincone, 2003: 352-353; Einaudi, 2007). With this in mind MP Livia Turco and Minister of the Interior Giorgio Napolitano were called to formulate a new proposal, which became law on 6 March 1998 (law n. 40).

In presenting the proposal for public discussion, Turco insisted on three aspects: strict planning of incoming flows of immigrants; new measures against organised crime linked to the smuggling of people across the borders; citizenship and integration policies for the immigrants (Einaudi, 2007: 211; Zincone, 2003). During the development of the new law, it became clear that the approach to the reform adopted by Turco and Napolitano was deeply different from that of their predecessors. The various phases of the negotiations followed a bottom-up style, based on a constant dialogue with the advocacy coalition: unions, religious associations, scout groups, feminist groups, evangelical representatives, political opponents and magistrates of the juvenile court. The clear will to start a 'concertazione' led to an awakening of the interlocutors and a reconfirmation of the central role played in the past by interest groups and charities, after years of silence and weak participation on their part. These were not necessarily

only Catholic associations, even though Turco was traditionally close to the Catholic world, but were also interfaith associations or groups linked to political parties such as ARCI ('Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana', formerly a recreational association of the PCI). Academics, civil servants and experts were also directly asked to contribute to the discussion bringing their specific expertise into the debate (Zincone, 2003: 353; Einaudi, 2007: 213). The same propensity towards policy-learning was also confirmed by the attempt to compare the Italian situation with that of other countries (and particularly those which had opted for multiculturalism) in order to incorporate 'good practice' into social activities and legislative proposals.

However, this inclination towards an open dialogue during the preparation of the first draft of the law declined as it approached the stage of the final debate: once the Bill was made non-amendable and its responsibility went to technical committees, the role of the advocacy coalition could only have a weak and indirect influence on the final text (Zincone, 2003: 354). Looking closer at the content of the reform, the first innovation introduced was the compulsory annual entry flow planning as well as the possibility to establish quotas of arrivals from countries which had signed bilateral agreements with Italy. Moreover, in order to fight the illegal employment of migrants, the law made available a new type of work visa for those who did not have a work contract but intended to enter the country and find a job once there. Foreigners were given twelve months to find a job: if they were still unemployed at the end of the period of time they had to leave Italy. The Turco-Napolitano law also introduced the 'permesso di lavoro stagionale', a temporary visa for those employed in seasonal jobs, which could be extended to a maximum of nine months. The incentive to leave the country when the visa expired consisted in the possibility for those who left to re-enter legally a second time. Moreover, immigrants with a permanent job could apply for a two years visa, which could be extended for two more years and then,

after five years of residence, could become a ‘carta di soggiorno’, ‘un titolo di soggiorno di durata indeterminata che attribuisce ai cittadini stranieri che la ottengono diritti aggiuntivi rispetto a quelli determinati dal normale permesso di soggiorno’ (Einaudi, 2007: 216; Melotti, 2004).

In this way Italy was for the first time acknowledging the difference between temporary and permanent immigrants, already recognised in many other European countries. Following the ‘humanitarian and solidaristic approach’ to the issue, the law also introduced a ‘social protection’ permit for victims who collaborated with the authorities to fight prostitution and human trafficking (Zincone, 2006: 357). To defeat human trafficking, the measure established that those caught exploiting illegal immigrants would serve up to fifteen years in jail. As for the most restrictive parts of the reform, the rejection of migrants at the borders, repatriation and the prohibition to re-enter the country for the following five years became an important part of the strategy to defeat illegal entry/residence: repatriation could also be imposed on those who had committed a crime and had to serve a certain period of time in prison or those who did not have valid IDs. However, children under sixteen, pregnant women, permit holders and relatives of Italian citizens could not be expelled (Einaudi, 2007: 217).

Another new measure, bitterly criticised by the advocacy coalition, was the creation of the so-called CTP (‘centri di permanenza temporanea’ – centres for temporary detention) where illegal immigrants could be kept for twenty days (extendible to 30), the time supposedly needed to identify them and to obtain the authorisation from their countries of origin to receive them back. The committee in charge of writing the law, and particularly Livia Turco, never managed to reform the citizenship system as they were planning to do, since this would have necessarily entailed a change in the constitution, which could only be done with a separate law. In 1999, Livia Turco and Minister of the Interior

Rosa Russo Jervolino presented a proposal for such a law, with the aim of allowing migrants to apply for Italian citizenship after five years of residence in the country as well as giving children of immigrants born in Italy the same rights by the time they enrolled in primary school, as long as one of the parents was Italian or both of them had lived in Italy for five years (Zuccolini, 11/02/99). Not only was this reform not approved then, but the issue of citizenship is still at the centre of a cross-party (polemical) debate today. On that occasion, the most bitter criticism of the proposal to grant migrants citizenship and the right to vote came from AN's leader Gianfranco Fini, who instead supported Forza Italia in its suggestion to make it easier for foreign citizens of Italian origins to acquire an Italian passport and vote in political elections (Constitutional amendment n.1 of 17 January 2000 and Statute n. 459/2001; Tintori, 2009). Interestingly, Fini's position has radically changed in the last year, as will be shown later.

Despite the fact that the Turco-Napolitano law was generally defined by members of the opposition (included representatives of AN and FI) as reasonable, well-structured and coherent, it had to face the enraged criticism of the Northern League, which, having consolidated its electoral support at a national level, started turning its attention towards immigration, raising its voice in the public debate and very often embracing controversial and 'politically incorrect' stances. The Turco and Napolitano proposal, however, encountered various criticisms also within the Left, with PRC and the Greens closer to the advocacy coalition in demanding more rights for the immigrants (such as making expulsion illegal even for those immigrants who had committed a crime).

5. The years of transition: from a solidarist to an identitarian approach

The 1990s represent a transitional phase in the national debate on immigration, leading to the changes in public opinion on the subject, a new role of the mass media in echoing the concerns of the political system, and a constantly increasing number of arrivals, following events such as the second Albanian crisis in 1997 and rising cases of intolerance. It is indeed at this point that the Lega starts formulating that anti-immigrants rhetoric analysed in the previous chapter, although in this escalating intolerance it was still relatively isolated and criticised by its allies and even perceived as racist by the almost entire 'Polo delle Libertà'. (Zincone, 2003; Melotti, 2004; Balbo and Manconi, 2004). However, it did not take much longer before the League's position prevailed and became the trademark of an increasingly common (electoral) strategy on the part of a more united Right, responsible for pushing the debate to a new level of intolerance (Guolo, 2003). Statements such as those of Borghezio and Maroni on the need to use plastic bullets against the immigrants or to send them back to their countries on military planes to avoid the risk of them raping the hostesses marked the beginning of a new season of provocations and controversies. Bossi himself took part in this escalation of verbal violence, for instance calling immigrants of African origins 'bingo bongo' or suggesting bombing the ships and shooting to prevent new arrivals (Stella, 1996).

The rhetoric of the Northern League has been broadly examined in the previous chapter. What matters here is to try and explain what determined this shift from an inefficient response to immigration, which was nonetheless 'solidaristic' in its intentions, to a dramatically more exclusionary attitude towards the phenomenon. The spreading of institutional and social xenophobia since the mid 1990s involved not only Italy but Southern European countries in general (Daly and Barot, 1999). This growing hostility

can be attributed to a number of factors, first of all the concern of poor suburban areas where immigration tended to concentrate at the beginning and where competition for social services (such as access to housing) was higher (Zinn, 1996). Moreover, the failure of the reforms mentioned above in achieving their goal of integration/regularisation and, more than anything else, the inability to address the issue of illegal employment in the black economy, had contributed to consolidating the links between immigration and criminality in the public perception of the phenomenon (Colombo, 1997; Bonifazi, 1992). The mechanism described in the previous chapter according to which the perception of a threat and its recognition/legitimisation on the part of the political system contributes to make that danger real, sheds some light on the process of increasing suspicion on the part of Italians towards the foreign presence. Moreover, while the Right exploited the situation (and reinforced public anxiety) for electoral purposes, that part of the Left interested in discussing the possibility of a multicultural society focused exclusively on denouncing the racist attitudes of Italians, therefore blaming the latter for the intolerant turn taken by the debate. Intellectuals were part of this mechanism, since, as Melotti recalls, influential opinion makers such as Lerner, Bocca and many others never engaged with the need for structural reforms or more in general with the issue of immigration but rather blamed an 'abstract racism' as the only evil (Melotti, 2004: 162). It can be said that such an attitude in identifying the problem only in the citizens' innate racism probably favoured the emerging populist parties, which took such supposed intolerance on board and transformed it into a legitimate shared feeling on the basis of which citizens could (and indeed were encouraged to) reassert their own national and cultural identity (Campani, 1993: 507-535).

These populist political actors, in contrast to many intellectuals, successfully established a link between national belonging and immigration and started to exploit it for electoral purposes, arguing for the need to defend a threatened national and Catholic identity

and to fight against immigration. While the ‘war between the poor’ was escalating, the government seemed to neglect both the claims of Italian citizens demanding security and preferential access to resources and the rights of the newly arrived (Ibid.: 3).

The political discourse of populist parties and their criticism of the Martelli and the Turco-Napolitano laws contributed to strengthening the idea that ‘too much had been done for the immigrants’ (Campani, 1993: 507-535). The influence of this rhetoric, amplified by the media, can be better understood in light of the studies on the effect of political elites on public opinion, which argue that the attitude of party leaders and representatives are determinant in shaping public reaction, as it frees it from the stigma of being labelled as ‘intolerant’ or ‘unacceptable’ (McLaren, 2001:81-108). After the turmoil of Tangentopoli and the contradictory responses to sudden emergencies linked to mass inward migration, the Italians’ traditionally weak sense of national identity (Putnam, 1993) found in this populist rhetoric a means to legitimise identification of an in-group and an out-group. Identifying the ‘other’ became synonymous with marginalisation (of the immigrants) (Dal Lago, 2004). The progressive shift in the position of high representatives of the Church, consisting in finding a common ground with the Northern League in defence of Catholicism as the traditional religion, contributed to legitimising the political action of the Lega, when not directly supporting it, as for instance in the joint demonstrations against the building of new mosques in 2002 (Melotti, 2004).

The (widespread by the late 1990s) social and political attitude of intolerance towards immigrants represents the pre-condition for a new season of exclusionary responses to immigration marked by the latest two measures on immigration: the Bossi-Fini law and the so-called ‘pacchetto sicurezza’ (security package).

6. Moving towards the Bossi-Fini law: the identitarian-legalitarian turn

In December 1998, the event that seemed to signal the legalistic identitarian turn in the Right's position on immigration was the collection, organised by the League with the support of the MSI and Forza Nuova (the extreme Right-wing movement funded by Roberto Fiore and Massimo Morsello), of 700,000 signatures of citizens demanding a referendum to abrogate the Turco-Napolitano law. For the first time the proposal for a new law came from common citizens and seemingly appeared to respond to shared needs and concerns as well as detached from that elitarian attitude that had characterised the previous debates on the theme. This does not necessarily mean that political parties were not the main agent behind this social mobilisation.

Despite the recurrent demonstrations and the mobilisation of a considerable number of citizens, the initiative was dismissed by the Constitutional Court in February 2000 as it contravened the conditions of the Schengen agreement (Einaudi, 2007: 294). The National Alliance and Forza Italia, concerned about the fact that the League was at that point the only party responding to the growing fears of the citizens, decided not to let it benefit from that strategy and started themselves moving towards similar positions, even before they formed a coalition and while the Left was still in power (Zincone, 2003: 369). In March 1999, Fini, presenting his position as motivated by the fear that 'citizens would seek private justice' and as aimed at preventing racist episodes from taking place, presented a proposal for a new law on immigration, also authored by MP Landi di Chiavenna and backed by MPs Maurizio Gasparri and Ignazio La Russa among others (law proposal 5808/ 25 Luglio 1998). Officially put forward as a reaction to the League's xenophobic position, the proposal was based on a distinction between legal and illegal immigration and it aimed at fighting the latter without being hostile to the former. However, the proposal

did share Bossi's suggestion of introducing the crime of illegal entry/stay and collecting the immigrants' fingerprints. Furthermore, it backed Bossi's idea of assigning specific quotas of immigrants to single regions in order to avoid concentration of people of the same ethnic and/or religious belonging, 'in quanto ciò può facilmente comportare l'insorgenza e la recrudescenza di consorterie, bande o cupole del crimine [...] così da assecondare la ricettività locale del mercato del lavoro, ove essa esiste, a tutto favore del processo di integrazione' (Landi di Chiavenna, cited in Einaudi, 2007: 295). This proposal, opposed by coalition allies such as CCD's (centrist party Centro Cristiano Democratico) representatives Marco Follini and Pierferdinando Casini, was never approved. However, this move contributed to pushing the League closer to Forza Italia. At the beginning of 2000, Bossi reached an agreement with his newly found ally Berlusconi based on a two-point programme: implementation of 'devolution' and a stricter control of immigration.

Following the collection of 50,000 signatures, another 'legge di iniziativa popolare' was presented in 2000. It was clearly informed by a combination of functionalist and identitarian approaches. On the one hand, functionalism was intended as an approach that 'aims to make entry and residence permits for immigrants dependent on the economic financial and demographic needs of the host country and consequently seeks to regulate immigration flows on the basis of present and future demand for labour', preventing immigrants from 'becoming a social security burden' (Zincone 2003: 351). On the other hand, the identitarian perspective 'fears that the presence of immigrants will alter the national culture, and may consequently pursue a strategy of limiting and screening immigration flows and citizenship, with a strong preference for immigrants of national origin or originating from areas considered culturally homogeneous' (Ibid.: 352).

As Einaudi put it, 'La legge era tesa a contrastare l'immigrazione in tutte le sue forme' (Einaudi, 2007: 296). The introductory statements of the text, formulated by representatives of the Northern League, was a direct attack against the Left and its presumed intention to use a 'falso buonismo' in order to gain electoral support from the immigrants, an argument since then regularly put forward by the party in order to 'prove' the supposed hypocrisy of its political opponents. Its programmatic declaration talked of contrasting the 'Jacobin' model of society with a 'Christian' one, a model which would take into account not only the impact of globalisation but also the history and tradition of the country. What is striking here is the fact that such a goal reproduced the same rhetoric and the same language used by the Catholic Church, characterised by the recurrent use of the terms Catholic and Italian as synonymous. The League had been clearly looking at the Church as an important ally, given its legacy on the sense of national identity, while at the same time exploiting its new views on issues related to immigration.

On a more practical level, the Bossi-Fini law aimed at replacing the 'logica delle sanatorie' with a logic of prevention, by rejecting new immigrants and refusing re-entry to those already expelled, according to a 'zero tolerance' approach presented by the League as the only adequate response to the phenomenon: 'La chiave dell'ingresso doveva essere il lavoro e l'adempimento dei doveri fiscali' (Einaudi, 2007:297). The strict link between work and visa was confirmed by the fact that, in order to enter Italy legally, immigrants had to have a valid work contract, stipulated before leaving the country of origin, and could no longer reach Italy first and then be allowed a short period of time to find employment. In this sense, the Bossi-Fini recalls the first decrees on immigration analysed above and therefore is not as 'revolutionary' as sometimes it has been defined: what changed was the rhetoric, as the focus was on the immigrants' threat to national identity, whereas previously it was on the job market and the protection of Italian

workers. Looking at the other norms put forward by the law, more power was given to the regions, whose mayors had to form a 'confederation' in order to establish different quotas to be calculated according to the needs of the local economy and the direct requests of councils or factories. Moreover, illegal entry or permanence in the country would become a penal crime to be punished by immediate expulsion (the immigrant was to be accompanied to the border by the police). This most extreme article of the law was never approved, mainly because of the opposition of centre parties CCD (Centro Cristiano Democratico) and CDU (Cristiani Democratici Uniti) (later merged together to form the UDC, Unione Democratici Cristiani) and that of Catholic associations such as Caritas, which appealed to Catholic MPs sitting on the benches of Forza Italia as well as to international organisations such as Amnesty International.

The main outcome of the measure was the introduction of a new residence permit, once again strictly linked to a work contract, only renewable for the same period, in this way turning the 'permesso di soggiorno' into a private contract between employer and employee. The measure of verifying whether a particular job could be done by an Italian before employing an immigrant was reintroduced. At the same time, following a proposal by MP Mirco Tremaglia, citizens of Italian origins were given priority, with the introduction of protected special quota of permits reserved to them. Despite the fact that European guidelines had fixed in five years the maximum period of time, regular immigrants had to wait before applying for the 'carta di soggiorno': in the first draft of the law it was raised to eight years, reduced to six in the final version. Notwithstanding the will to restrict immigration and prevent new arrivals, the measure had to include a new 'sanatoria', to mitigate the opposition of the industrialists lobbying with the Left and Catholic institutions.

Finally, the definitive bill established that the fingerprints of those applying for a visa (or renewing it) had to be collected and

that illegal immigrants could be kept in the CTPs (now renamed CIE, Centri di identificazione ed espulsione) for up to sixty days (previously it was 20 extendible to 30). If the identification of the immigrant was not completed within 60 days, the individual was given five days to leave Italy: if the illegal migrant did not leave the country and if s/he re-entered the country within 12 years from the expulsion, s/he risked being punished with up to 4 years in prison (Articles 12g and 13a; b). The measure, entitled *Modifica alla normativa in materia di immigrazione*, was finally approved on 11 July 2002 (law 30 Luglio 2002/189). Once again, the official law was somewhat far from the original draft, although this time the need to find a compromise was not due to the intervention of the advocacy coalition, excluded from the negotiations, but mainly linked to the action of the Constitutional Court, which rejected a number of norms contradicting international agreements or not complying with international law and violating human rights. As for internal criticism, while AN and the League formed a fairly united front, Forza Italia, and particularly its leader as well as its Catholic component, tended to keep a low profile and to distance themselves from the more intolerant statements and in general from the aggressive political discourse of its allies (Zincone, 2006: 363; Anon., 2002b; Anon., 2002c).

The Bossi-Fini law has often been described as an empty box, given its inability to mark a real break with previous legislation (which it actually reconfirmed). At the same time it was defended by commentators such as Melotti (2004) who claimed he did not understand the strong criticism and charges of intolerance on the part of scholars such as Cavazzani (2002), De Giorgi (2002), Dal Lago (2004). What Melotti was neglecting in considering the outcomes of the law is the fact that these cannot be measured merely in terms of articles passed and rejected, and that the balance between confirming the previous measures and breaking away from them needs to be judged also on the basis of the political discourse underlying the discussion of the law. Scholars such as Zincone

(2003) and Einaudi (2007) seem to agree with Turco's definition of the Bossi-Fini as 'un manifesto politico, soprattutto voluto per sostenere una retorica contro gli immigrati, che il ministro Bossi è solito sintetizzare nell'espressione: "immigrati pochi, solo per lavoro, solo per il tempo strettamente necessario e poi ritornino a casa"' (Turco, 2002, cited in Einaudi, 2007: 321). Nonetheless, this manifesto, 'which had a purely demagogic propaganda purpose and no operational capacity' (Zincone, 2003:364), clearly contributed to turn immigration into a political issue of central importance in the electoral discourse of the Right as well as that of the Left. Indeed, the latter was forced to adapt and to an extent follow a similar path when reacting to crimes committed by immigrants in areas where it was in power, such as in Rome at the time of the Reggiani killing (October 2007). In these circumstances, driven by the need to respond to citizens' fear and anger, mayor Veltroni opted for a zero tolerance policy, turning security into the priority of his coalition. (Anon., 2007; Battistelli and Lucianetti, 2010).

Despite the antagonistic rhetoric informing the political discourse of the Centre-Right and, increasingly, the Centre-Left, a comparison between the laws passed by the two coalitions reveals that the final drafts of the bills passed are not dramatically different. According to scholars such as Colombo and Sciortino (2004), Zincone and Di Gregorio (2002), there is clear continuity between the immigration policies of the two governments, despite their radically different ideological positions, and despite a discrepancy in the decision-making style of the two reforms, with the centre left bargaining between government and opposition and the Centre-Right acting unilaterally. This chapter argues that, in this sense, the Bossi-Fini goes back to a position that, when considered in its practical goals rather than in terms of the language used, is fairly similar to the first law on the labour market passed in 1963, which for the first time linked entry in the country to a job contract.

This is not the only paradox: a high level of contradiction can be found within each coalition, in the discrepancy between the rhetoric and the actual legislation: on the one hand, albeit supporting a multicultural approach based on the immigrants' right to maintain their cultural identity and to access resources, the Left did not take concrete steps to integrate migrants or just left implementation of the measures to be carried out at a local level, depending on the amount of resources, the involvement of different associations and the councils' own initiatives. On the other hand, the Right's public discourse tended to stigmatise immigrants, while at the same time periodically regularising many of them in response to economic needs (and particularly in those areas of the North where the League is the first party). In the case of the Left, the apparent discrepancy is due to the fact that at times of 'emergencies' or when the citizens express their fears, it has to be seen to respond by adopting more severe measures. When the Right turned immigration into a propaganda tool, the Left could only ignore the voters' requests at the risk of alienating them, therefore it had to compete with the Right on similar ground. Finally, some of the reasons for the inefficiency of the legislation are its implementation, its internal contradictions (i.e. block of new entries versus recurrent 'sanatorie'), the need to meet the expectations of the electorate and the seemingly growing demand for 'security'.

7. The ‘security package’

Measures such as the Bossi-Fini set fertile ground for more restrictive laws, by raising the bar of what is acceptable and what is not in dealing with immigration through an aggressive and occasionally violent rhetoric constantly reiterated through the years. The so-called security package represents a dramatic turn in the state’s reaction to immigration, which interrupted that process of continuity described above. Passed in May 2008, it is referred to as a ‘package’ as it includes several measures: a decree law (decreto legge), three legislative decrees (decreti legislativi), a draft law and a decree of the Council of Ministers. The different measures will now be analysed separately to explain more in depth the matters they deal with, whereas an analysis of the ‘package’ as a whole will follow in order to make sense of the changes introduced, the reactions in the public sphere and in civil society and finally their consequences.

A law by decree is a temporary law that has the immediate force of law (once it is published in the official bulletin). It needs to be converted into law by Parliament within sixty days from its adoption (Merlino, 2009: 7). The law decree n. 92 ‘recante misure urgenti in materia di sicurezza pubblica’ focuses, as implied in its title, on ‘urgent’ measures related to public security. It establishes that non-EU citizens have to be expelled and EU citizens ‘removed’ from the Italian territory if they are sentenced to more than two years in prison. Until 2008, according to article 235 of the Italian penal code, only non-EU citizens could be expelled and only when sentenced to more than ten years’ imprisonment. Moreover, being an illegal immigrant became an ‘aggravating circumstance’ to be added to those already listed in article 61 of the penal code, which means that ‘an individual who has been convicted for having committed a crime and whose administrative status of stay in the country is irregular will now face jail sentences that are a third longer than those applicable to Italians’ (Merlino, 2009:8).

The measure also included a deterrent for landlords: those who let properties to illegal immigrants can spend from 6 months to 4 years in prison and have their property confiscated. The money coming from the sale of the confiscated properties is destined to preventing and contrasting offences linked to illegal immigration.

A particularly important change was introduced for what concerns local administrations: mayors can adopt special measures for urgent security reasons, which means they finally have that discretionary power the League had fought long and hard to obtain, as it emerged from the analysis of articles on the topic published in *La Padania* analysed in the previous chapter of this thesis. Finally, article 7 establishes that in circumstances of emergency, when citizens' security is believed to be at risk, the army can be employed in areas that need to be kept under control. This particular measure, resulting from an agreement between the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Defence, can be authorized for a maximum period of six months during which the highest number of soldiers used at any point cannot exceed 3,000 units. The government planned to use 1,000 soldiers to monitor the Centers of Identification and Expulsion, and to concentrate the others in metropolitan areas, particularly Milan, Rome and Naples, as well as in other provinces when requested by the local prefects (Merlino, 2009: 9; Naletto, 2009).

The three legislative decrees (5/2007; 30/2007 and 25/2008) deal with matters related to family reunification, EU citizens' residence and asylum seekers. They establish respectively that: family reunion is allowed in case of wives, minors, and disabled parents, although a DNA test can be required and this has to be paid for by the immigrant; EU citizens intending to stay in the country for more than three months need to prove they have an adequate income to support themselves and their families as well as to register with the right authorities within 10 days from the end of the three months, while the state has the right to deny entry for reasons

linked to public security. Finally, the last decree introduces limits in the asylum seekers' right of free movement and establishes that those who enter or stay irregularly can be kept in the Centers for Identification and Expulsion for up to 180 days (Naletto, 2009).

The draft law on public security (Act of Senate No. 733) is strictly connected to the decree law No. 92: it establishes that the acquisition of citizenship by marriage, previously obtainable in six months can only be requested after two years of marriage. However, its main aim is to make illegal entry in the country a crime: this particular measure, which had been suggested by the League and AN for a decade and never passed, becomes official with this draft law, punishing 'illegal immigration' with a prison sentence from six months to two years. The immigrant caught in a situation of illegality faces a short trial and immediate arrest. In order to make illegality more difficult to sustain and force irregular immigrants to leave, the measure also establishes that agencies which deal with remittances need to request and photocopy the residence permits of those sending money back to their countries (Naletto, 2009). The owners of money transfer agencies are not the only ones requested to denounce illegal immigrants: doctors and school teachers were also among the civil servants from whom the government expected collaboration. While the security package was still being discussed, many commentators looked at the idea of considering clandestinity as a crime *per se* just as another provocative *boutade* on the part of the Right (Ludovico, 2007; Cottone, 2008). Both the idea of applying sanctions to illegal immigration and that of demanding citizens to report on individual cases, represent 'an open violation of the constitutional principle of equality of all before the law' as well as a clear contravention of the international agreements on basic human rights (Naletto, 2009: 2).

The final and equally controversial measure introduced with the security package is included in the decree signed by the Council of

Ministers at a meeting in Bari in May 2008, when they declared a 'state of emergency' in relation to the presence of nomadic communities in the regions of Latium, Lombardy and Campania. In case of states of emergency, defined by law 225/92 (article 5) as 'natural calamities, catastrophes, or other events that according to their intensity and reach need to be faced by extraordinary powers and means', the Council of Ministers is allowed to put forward ad hoc 'ordinances' (ordinanze) to deal with the situation. The powers given in these circumstances to the Council of Ministers can be delegated to 'commissioners'. In 2008, such powers were transferred to the prefects, who became responsible for monitoring the camps, identifying and registering the individuals living in each settlement, mobilising the police against those illegal immigrants who therefore had to be expelled, evicting those not legally entitled to live there and 'fostering integration', which usually means dealing with the fears and protests of local residents. To carry on these duties and implement the changes, the prefects had at their disposal selected units of the military force (Merlino, 2009: 13; Naletto, 2009: 2). Moreover, unarmed citizens registered in specific associations can be used by mayors and prefects to patrol the streets and inform the police of security threats they encounter in supposedly socially degraded areas. The so-called 'ronde', made official by this law, already existed and were carried out spontaneously by citizens organised in neighbourhood associations before the measure was passed. As Naletto recalls, many members of the 'ronde' groups are also members of Right-wing organisations or individuals 'involved in acts of apology of fascism' such as Gaetano Salva, leader of these 'ronde', prosecuted for racist propaganda and arrested in 2005 (Naletto, 2009: 2).

The first reactions to the measures contained in the security package began to arrive while the laws were still under parliamentary scrutiny. Unlike the responses to the previous legislation on immigration, these reactions were not only immediate but also transversal to the political spectrum and

including different sectors of civil society as well as involving foreign countries, particularly those whose citizens were targeted in the laws, such as Romania. Within the Centre-Right coalition, while the Northern League claimed the paternity of the security package, AN leader Gianfranco Fini was the first to bitterly criticise some specific articles included in the draft version of the laws and particularly those on the so-called ‘presidi-spia’, which established the need on the part of teachers and doctors to denounce illegal immigrants. In a letter sent to Minister of the Interior Maroni, Fini expressed concern over the unconstitutionality of a measure which would inevitably lead to an open violation of migrants’ human rights as defined by the EU:

La disposizione, infatti, subordinando la fruizione di pubblici servizi alla presentazione di documenti inerenti al soggiorno presso gli uffici della nostra amministrazione, impedisce che di questi servizi possano godere gli stranieri privi dei predetti documenti. Ciò fa sorgere, soprattutto a livello applicativo, un problema di compatibilità con altre norme. Un solo esempio delle conseguenze che ne deriverebbero: ai minori stranieri verrebbe negata l'iscrizione alla scuola dell'obbligo ed il conseguente diritto all'istruzione che è attualmente tutelato, indipendentemente dalla regolarità della posizione in ordine al loro soggiorno, nelle forme e nei modi previsti per i cittadini italiani’ (Anon., 2009b).

Fini’s intervention on the matter was welcomed and praised by representatives of the opposition such as PD (Democratic Party) MP Giuseppe Fioroni and IdV (Italia dei Valori) MP Vittorio Borghese, according to whom the measures would have the paradoxical effect of promoting integration by segregating foreigners (‘il nostro modo di integrare i bambini e gli studenti sarebbe quello di farli passare dal carcere’) (Ibid.). Centre-Left parties, particularly PD and its leader Franceschini, attributed the responsibility for the law entirely to the Northern League, accused of blackmailing the government by guaranteeing its loyalty to the majority coalition only when given full powers to pursue its

federalist project and to introduce ‘zero tolerance’ policies on immigration. However, Berlusconi himself often remarked upon the fact that this was ‘Una legge fatta per la serenità dei cittadini, da me fortemente voluta’ (Anon., 2009a). Equally satisfied by the approval of the draft were representatives of AN such as Gasparri who, taking the distance from party secretary Fini, supported Maroni and fellow Northern League politicians in their claim that the law was not racist while defining the measure as ‘una legge per gli Italiani’ (Ibid.). In responding to the accusation of bringing back fascist racial laws, the Minister of the Interior issued an official statement, in which he argued that the security package did not forbid mixed marriages or legal status for those who entered the country legally. Such statement was also a reaction to a petition against the law promoted by Italian intellectuals, including Camilleri, Ovadia, Fo, Maraini and Tabucchi, in the pages of magazine *MicroMega* (Ibid.,; ‘Anon., 2009e).

An immediate reaction from civil society came from the national associations of doctors and teachers, particularly those represented by the Cgil (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro), who took a clear stance against their supposed duty to denounce illegal immigrants. The main reasons for their protest were summarised in the slogans used for their demonstration outside Montecitorio on 29 April 2009: ‘1. Diritto alla sicurezza per tutti; 2. No al ddl sicurezza; 3. No alle ronde; 4. No al razzismo; 5. Libertà di cura per i medici e gli immigrati’ (CGL, 2009). As stated in their manifesto:

tutto l’impianto del ddl sulla sicurezza [...] configura una restrizione intollerabile dei diritti umani e delle persone con un segno di forte discriminazione e vessazione razziale, in più cercando di arruolare, in questa guerra agli immigrati, intere categorie sociali (medici, infermieri, insegnanti, operatori pubblici, affittuari, datori di lavoro e comuni cittadini) spingendoli alla delazione ed all’accanimento discriminatorio e razzista.

Mentre il Parlamento discute di questi provvedimenti il clima e gli episodi di razzismo e di violenza si moltiplicano nel paese con un atteggiamento gravissimo e irresponsabile di certa stampa che istiga alla violenza razzista. (Ibid.)

Similar claims of unconstitutionality and racism came from international organisations such as Amnesty International and Mèdecins Sans Frontières as well as from the European Union. Several representatives of the latter argued that the new package and particularly its approach towards ‘the Roma and Sinti emergency’ leads to the social stigmatisation of foreign citizens and determines an increase in violence and racism towards them (Naletto, 2009: 2; Hammarberg, 2009):

The choice to intervene in the legal condition of foreigners only through safety laws and measures sends an important symbolic message: that so-called ‘insecurity’ is due to the presence of foreigners, who, as they were born in another country, are inclined to criminality by nature. It is exactly this rhetoric, deliberately based on fear and the perception of foreigners as a threat, that allows such laws, so explicitly detrimental to the rights of migrants, to exist. (Naletto, 2009: 2)

Moreover, as mentioned above, concern started to emerge in those foreign countries whose citizens were targeted by the new laws, and particularly in Romania. The reaction of the then PM Calin Popescu Tariceanu arrived when the law was still under parliamentary scrutiny: while confirming his will to cooperate with Italian authorities to reduce crime and monitor the movement of Romanian citizens, Tariceanu remarked upon the need to prevent and fight a spreading xenophobic attitude towards an entire population that was being discriminated against despite it contributing to the development of the Italian economy and society (Tariceanu, 2009). Regarding the reaction to the law on the part of the Catholic Church, the main opposition came again from individual parish priests working for voluntary associations, following a mechanism described in Chapter II, according to which

opposition to exclusionary attitudes towards immigration is inversely proportional to the position held in the Catholic hierarchy. Members of Catholic charities and associations traditionally close to the migrants, such as Caritas, took a very anti-security package stance from the beginning and without hesitation.

Other representatives of institutions with a more theoretical interest in immigration were slightly more ambiguous in their reactions. Among others, this was the case of the secretary for the 'Pastorale per i Migranti', archbishop Agostino Marchetto, who intervened to remark upon the need to avoid conflict with the newly arrived and to respect human rights. He openly criticised specific articles of the law (such as denying illegal immigrants education and healthcare) while praising others, such as expulsion if used only as the 'extrema ratio' (www.migrantitorino.it). The archbishop strongly remarked that criticising the aspect of the law which openly violated migrants' rights was his duty as a Catholic, a statement which has been interpreted as a reply to the official rejection of that position on the part of the Vatican expressed by Benedict XVI's spokesman don Federico Lombardi (*Adista*, n.76/09). Several more cardinals intervened to criticise the law, often taking a clearer stance, as in the case of archbishop of Milan Dionigi Tettamanzi who, during the G8 in 2009, reminded world leaders attending mass in Milan Cathedral that 'i diritti dei deboli non sono diritti deboli'. Tettamanzi also argued that this position generally tends to fade away when the immigrants can be exploited for personal and economic interests (Tettamanzi, 2008) statement, seemingly addressing the internal contradiction of the Northern League, divided between the need for immigrants in the factories of the North and its xenophobic rhetoric, triggered a series of reactions on the part of 'leghisti', such as MP Calderoli, according to whom Tettamanzi and his supporters had to be considered as a member of the opposition parties (and therefore of the 'communists') (Ibid.).

As support for Tettamanzi started to grow and more cardinals, such as the archbishops of Lombardy and Sicily, joined the discussion, the Vatican retreated from the debate, and no more official reproaches of representatives critical of the law were made public. On the contrary, even newspapers close to the Vatican seemed to reconsider their initial positions, as was the case for *Avvenire*. Having defined the security package as ‘una legge senza infamia e senza lode’ on 3 July 2009, Pietro Chinellato rectified his statement the following day by writing that it was important not to neglect the signals of a ‘deriva xenofoba’ and that ‘la sicurezza è un’esigenza imprescindibile, ma che non si afferma a scapito dell’accoglienza’ (Chinellato, 2009). Leaving aside a more detailed analysis of the Church’s reaction to the new measure, what is interesting to note is that once again the Church did not hold a uniform position on the matter but rather reproduced the same internal division previously shown in Chapter II, with the only exception of several bishops who in these circumstances put forward their personal view in support of immigrants. To a certain extent, it can be said that the security package was considered by some of them too radical not to require their intervention on it. The Vatican, however, limited its official intervention to taking a distance from those among its representatives who were critical of the new law.

The internal division within the Catholic hierarchy, confirmed on this occasion, has been interpreted by some commentators as a new challenge faced by the Church today: ‘quella compattezza che con grande lucidità era stata individuata quale elemento fondamentale della sua forza e capacità di radicamento sembra venire progressivamente meno nel cuore stesso del suo impero globale: l’Italia’ (Carnevale and Gigante, 2009). On the contrary, the Waldensian Church seemed to reach a unitary front in launching a campaign in protest against the security package. Such a campaign also involved a call for a national day of fastening to express solidarity with immigrants, defined as the victims of the law. The

initiative was supported by several representative of Centre-Left parties, such as Paolo Ferrero (RC), Emma Bonino (PR), and Sonia Alfano (IdV) (Naso, 2009).

Finally, a last reaction came from the CSM (Consiglio Superiore della Magistratura), which judged the law to be inefficient and actually counterproductive as it would obstruct judicial activity as well as violate the Constitution (Anon., 2009c). Several jurists noticed how the new law also creates practical problems such as overcrowded prisons, with more people going to jail and being kept there for a longer time. According to them, given the impossibility of putting into practice some key measures such as the expulsion of illegal immigrants, the security package rather represents a symbolic statement ('norma-manifesto') inadequate to work as a deterrent. The law's repressive rhetoric, according to which jailing illegal immigrants solves the problem of criminality, becomes therefore a 'strumento extrapenale, nel quadro di una strategia globale di tutela'. Furthermore, it denies immigrants their basic human rights and particularly 'la libertà personale', 'il diritto storicamente più tutelato dalle Costituzioni di ogni epoca [...] viene così azzerato per periodi tutt'altro che brevi, sulla base del provvedimento di un'autorità amministrativa (il questore)' (Viganò, 2008: 820).

The first general datum which emerges from the analysis of this new package of measures is the fact that it represents a clear moment of rupture with the previous legislation. After years of bills that in their final draft were not dramatically different from one another, where the most radical views on the most adequate response to a growing number of arrivals were blunted by the several modifications and amendments necessary for their approval, the latest measure exposed openly the paradoxical position of the Northern League. Its strategy was indeed aimed at reconciling an increasingly exclusionary attitude towards the newly arrived with the growing demand for more immigrants coming

from the industrial areas of the North, where its anti-immigrant rhetoric contributed to secure it electoral consensus. This paradox can be explained and understood in light of Cento Bull's definition of the League's political action as 'simulative politics'. Such a contradiction emerges when considering the centrality of identity politics in the party's ideology, typical of parties which focus on pre-material and non-economic issues (Bets, 1993). Starting from the premise that identity and interests are not necessarily antithetical and that in fact they can be 'mutually reinforcing', she claims that the success of right-wing parties like the Northern League can be ascribed to 'their ability to reconcile apparently irreconcilable phenomena of both a material and pre-material nature' (Cento Bull, 2009: 3) The Northern League, in fact, aims to respond to the economic aspirations of strong global competitors while responding to their fears and anxieties regarding the impact of globalisation. In this sense, simulation has to be intended as 'the use of symbols, signs and images which do not represent or refer to anything that is authentic, but which themselves produce or perform reality, and present themselves as evidence for this authenticity' (Blühdorn, 2007: 267). According to Cento Bull, Bossi's party can be best understood within a framework of simulation, given the fact that competitive industrial areas can also be exposed to a widespread sense of anxiety and distress (Cento Bull, 2010:5). 'In this context [...] the Lega has developed a politics that 'simulates' being able to reconcile irreconcilable material and cultural trends, for instance, by treating immigration as a 'temporary' phenomenon', or providing 'a vision of a return to an idealized communitarian society which is both crime-free and (almost) immigrant-free (Ibid; Cento Bull, 2009: 143).

8. Conclusion

The analysis conducted until this point shows that the Italian legislation on immigration reflects the same lack of consistency and long-term strategy which has characterised the cultural and political debate on the issue. The main trait of the laws passed until the early 1990s is their attempt to solve a series of unforeseen crises while regulating the internal job market following a protectionist approach. Until 1990, there is no reference to any of the models put forward by other European countries to deal with the phenomenon. References to multiculturalism as a fallacious model will appear a decade later and will become typical of the rhetoric of Right-wing parties. Turco and Napolitano were the first politicians to look at multiculturalism as a point of reference that could be applied to the Italian situation as well, even though the implementation of policies inspired by this model did not go beyond an informal stage. Until the late 1990s, the approval of new measures was not accompanied by a general discussion on the most adequate means to foster integration, an attitude which contributes to explain the sudden concern that invested the political world and civil society when immigration manifested itself at an unprecedented scale in terms of waves of arrivals and clashes with the local population. Even when, at the turn of the new century, immigration became a hot topic in political discourse and the two coalitions turned it into a decisive element in electoral campaigns characterised by heated polemics, the individual laws passed were all similar in their final drafts, showing mainly a degree of continuity.

The fact that, despite the deeply antagonistic views expressed by the different parties on the subject, these laws were overall similar in what they established as well as in their consequences, can be explained by looking at a number of factors. First of all, the position of the Left shifted from a general will to welcome immigrants to an attitude much closer to that of the Right, with

whom it chose to compete in reassuring the citizens, who seemingly demanded greater security. This change was triggered not only by the requests of public opinion but also by specific episodes of violence such as the Reggiani killing in October 2007, when the Left reacted to the anger on the part of Italian citizens by closing various nomadic camps and threatening a mass expulsion of all illegal immigrants. The second reason why the laws passed until 2008 were similar in many respects is due to the tensions which emerged during the process of negotiation and parliamentary scrutiny, when the more radical changes suggested by both extremes of the political spectrum were rejected by the Constitutional Court or simply balanced each other out. Moreover, international organisations and of the EU also contributed to minimising or erasing the most controversial aspects of the laws.

By the end of the 1990s, immigration had become an important tool exploited by both coalitions to gain support and in this sense it started to represent the ground on which political parties would compete, sometimes almost blackmailing their allies, as in the case of the conditions posed by the Northern League to Forza Italia in order to remain part of the coalition. The language used by the different political actors shows some similarities: from the word 'sanatoria' ('sanare' means to heal) which implies an interpretation of immigration as an illness or a plague, to the term 'extracomunitario' and its inward-looking perspective focused on the inside, the community. The main difference in the terminology used to formulate the laws until 2008 can be noticed in the transformation of the 'centri di permanenza temporanea' into 'centri di identificazione e espulsione', where clearly the focus shifted from the fact that immigrants would only be temporarily deprived of their freedom to the idea that expulsion was the only expectation they could have after identification. As stated earlier, the Bossi-Fini law can be considered as the last measure in this cycle as it almost coincided with the measure passed in 1963, which made entry dependent on the possession of a valid work

contract. It can be said that the 1963 measure was even stricter, since it established that before employing a foreigner an employer had to verify that no Italians were available for that job. However, it is also the case that the Bossi-Fini law opened a new season of political discourses openly aimed at discouraging immigration and linking it to all the challenges Italy was facing, from pollution to crime and to economic decline.

The 2008 law represents a clear turn and clear departure from two decades of measures that, albeit lacking a long-term strategy, were the result of constant negotiations. The security package put the definitive word on a trend that had already started to outline an exclusionary attitude towards immigrants, considered first exclusively as workers and eventually as a threat. With the introduction of the ‘crime of clandestinity’ immigrants clearly become *homines sacri*, invisible in the public arena and exploited as scapegoats, the target of popular anger as well as the reassuring ‘other’, fundamental to place any blame outside the community.

The influence of the Northern League in this turn is self-evident. If it can be said that until 2008 Italy did not seem to follow any model in reacting to immigration, and therefore the last hypothesis listed in the introduction to this chapter has to be considered true, it is also possible to argue that since 2008 the model put forward by the League has been adopted by the state, a state in which the party represents the strongest voice among those debating immigration. The influence of the Church is much more difficult to assess: on the one hand, it cannot be said that it contributed to the affirmation of an exclusionary model of state and citizenship, on the other hand, its rhetoric, based on victimhood, and its call to protect a threatened Italian Catholic identity had definitely inspired and legitimized the discourse of the Northern League, which borrowed it and made it its own.

Conclusion

‘Un napoletano dell’antico Regno o un piemontese del regno subalpino si fecero italiani non rinnegando l’esser loro anteriore ma innalzandolo e risolvendolo in quel nuovo essere’ (Benedetto Croce, *Storia d’Europa*, 1932, ed.1993: 314-315).

It is with these words that Benedetto Croce described the Italian national identity which emerged after Unification (1861-1870), an identity that was more inclusive than previous regional and municipal affiliations. Looking back at the creation of the nation state and its first challenge of constructing a feeling of shared belonging, the philosopher argued that now an even broader shared identity as Europeans was required. This, he argued, could not be of any danger to national identity as it was not challenging but rather reinforcing it, since ‘le nazioni non sono dati naturali, ma stati di coscienza e formazioni storiche’ (Croce, 1993: 15). Since that time, the challenges Italy has had to face in terms of redefinition of national identity have been mainly twofold: the divided memory of fascism/anti-fascism, and globalisation. The first, which involved opposing interpretations of the regime, the war and the Resistance, has been at the centre of the public debate since the late 1980s, and represents the main perspective from which the idea of national belonging has been reconsidered. As this work has tried to show, this divided conception of Italianness has been held partially responsible for the country’s weak sense of national belonging.

As the 150th anniversary of the birth of the new nation approaches (1861-2011), official celebrations, exhibitions, conferences, talks in schools across the country have been announced by government and opposition (www.governo.it/150_italia_unita/anniversario/centro_espositivo.html). The anniversary could represent an occasion to (re)open a dialogue on the meaning of Italianness, on whether such a shared common belonging has ever been successfully achieved, and on its

role in today's global village. In preparation for the celebrations of 2011, national newspapers and journals have launched a series of opinion polls aimed at outlining a picture of how Italians interpret national belonging and at measuring the levels of 'patriottismo' within Italian civil society. According to a recent Istat survey, when asked what national unity is, 52 per cent of respondents said 'un bene irrinunciabile' and 22 per cent 'una realtà storica che si può anche modificare'. When asked whether patriotism as a value still exists today, 75 per cent of interviewees answered positively. According to those interviewed, Italianness is based on the values of the constitution (37 per cent), the language (25 per cent), the concept of homeland (24 per cent), and the Catholic Church (14 per cent). Among the traits typical of Italianness, the respondents identified hospitality (11 per cent) and solidarity (8 per cent). When asked about negative values, only 4 per cent mentioned racism, whereas the majority saw the mafia and a low level of 'senso civico' as the main issues. Despite the fact that patriotism is still acknowledged as an important value, and that national unity is described in positive terms, Italians are also aware of the challenges that national identity has had to face during the last 150 years. They perceive as key issues a persisting divided memory on controversial historical events, the impact of globalization and the emergence of federalist/separatist ideas put forward by new political parties and in particular by the Northern League. Immigration features among the external threats to which Italian identity is seemingly exposed today (www.fondazioneitaliani.it).

The debate on immigration exploded in the public sphere in the early 1990s, when for the first time Italian citizens as well as their political representatives became aware that the transition from being a country of emigration to becoming a country of immigration had been completed and was irreversible. The debates on national identity and on immigration began more or less at the same time, between the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Despite the fact that the two debates took place simultaneously, they ran

without intersecting until national identity and the foreign presence within the country became linked when the latter was perceived as a threat to the former. This was the main overlap between two debates that have otherwise been kept separate. In recent discussions there has been a tendency to respond to the perceived challenges to Italianness by focusing on national pride. Commenting on the debate on national identity in France, journalists and intellectuals such as Ida Magli and Giordano Bruno Guerra argued that ‘l’unico modo per mantenere la nostra identità è [...] volerne una, rispettarla, proteggerla’ (Anon., 2010). Their argument is that it is typically Italian to denigrate the homeland. According to Guerra, Italy should follow the example of France, where a Ministry of National Identity was created in 2007 to open a discussion on French identity and the challenges posed to it by immigration. However, as the 2009 international survey ‘Transatlantic Trends on Immigration’ showed, Italy is the country where the perception of immigration is more distorted, as Italians believed there to be four times as many immigrants than is actually the case: 6.5 per cent according to Istat and 23 per cent according to the interviewees (www.affarinternazionali.it): ‘Questo alto senso di insicurezza da un lato evidenzia la scarsa fiducia verso le politiche fino ad oggi adottate per affrontare il fenomeno, dall’altro è probabilmente conseguenza dell’alto livello di politicizzazione che caratterizza il dibattito sul problema, che ostacola sia la comprensione del problema che l’individuazione degli strumenti per affrontarlo’ (Matarazzo, 2009).

Many opinion makers have argued that the anniversary of Unification could be an occasion to re-open a discussion on the meaning of Italianness. While this would clearly be a step forward, since the need for a reinterpretation of the meaning of national identity has been the main subject of this work, the findings of this thesis suggest that it is highly optimistic. The thesis began by questioning whether Italy in reacting to immigration has been following any classic model of integration or whether it is putting

forward its own unique long term strategy to deal with the increasing number of arrivals. More importantly, it tried to establish whether the discussion on immigration had opened a debate on the need to re-define the meaning of Italian national identity in order to make it more inclusive of alternative/minority identities. In order to answer these questions, it looked at the different (often unrelated) debates on national identity and immigration as they emerged and acquired national relevance in the public sphere, identifying the main participants in such debates, rather than following a strict chronological approach or a systematic media analysis. Various actors (Italian intellectuals, the Catholic Church and the Northern League) were included because of their participation in one or more of the debates, and because they emerged as leading voices in such debates. While not an actor *per se*, successive laws on immigration, which have been informed by the debates analysed in this thesis, are the subject of the last chapter.

This thesis investigated when, how and why the discussion on national identity and that on immigration became relevant in the public discourse, and aimed at accounting for mainstream positions as well as for dissent within single groups. Finally it looked at the relationship between the different political actors and their influence on public opinion as well as on state policies. At all times the analysis focused not only on what was said but also on what was not discussed.

The discussion on the need for a renewed sense of national belonging began in the 1980s and reached its peak in the mid 1990s. Following a gradual process of political and social change, triggered by internal and external factors, a group of intellectuals, mainly historians, opened a discussion on the weakness of Italian identity, which they attributed to a divided memory of historical events such as Fascism, WWII and the Resistance. The discussion appears to have been dominated by the so-called revisionist, right-

wing historians writing in established broadsheets and non academic literary and political journals across the political spectrum. Dissent was voiced by only a minority of intellectuals, yet these had authoritative positions on the Left, for example philosopher Norberto Bobbio. In this context, national identity was analysed mainly by looking at the lack of shared ‘myths’ and narratives, which had supposedly prevented national identity from being unitary and inclusive of all Italian citizens. Few Italian intellectuals engaged with the question of immigration and those who did put forward isolated views never developed into a proper debate. Moreover, immigration was not linked to the discussion on Italianness nor was it considered relevant to a process of re-negotiation of a more inclusive (vis-à-vis both Italians and foreigners) national belonging. Moreover, despite the intensity of the debate on national belonging, it was never defined by intellectuals in positive terms. On the contrary it has been debated exclusively in terms of its weakness and failures and its contested nature. Thus, the implicit definition of identity which emerges from these exchanges seems to be characterised by those features that are judged to be missing in the Italian case: military success, a strong common historical legacy and political consensus. This thesis does not intend to suggest that there are no intellectuals putting forward more open and inclusive ideas of Italian identity. There may be any number of Italian scholars, journalists and opinion makers who have engaged with different interpretations of Italianness, but their voices have not featured in the national public debate on the theme.

Italian identity has also been at the centre of a discussion on immigration opened by the Catholic Church in 2000, a year which represents a watershed in the Church’s rhetoric on the foreign presence within the country. Immigration in this case was not discussed *per se*, but in relation to an openly recognised decline of Catholicism. The main actors involved in this debate were influential members of the Catholic hierarchy, who expressed their views in official speeches and documents written mainly for

professional clericals and intended for dissemination primarily among religious representatives. The documents addressed a specialist audience at a national level and worked according to a mechanism of mutual reinforcement. The debate was triggered not only by the recognition on the part of the Church of its own decline in terms of support and power, but also by the preparation for the Jubilee (2000) and by the discussion on a new law on freedom of religion. The Church adopted a double strategy to make its claims relevant for the nation: on the one hand it insisted upon the superiority of Catholicism while identifying religious belonging as the essence of Italian national identity; on the other hand it presented itself as a victim demanding more freedom of speech and protection on the part of the state. In this way it turned the perceived threats to Catholicism, such as the 'different cultures and ways of living of foreigners' into threats to Italianness. Following the idea that 'nobody is a foreigner within the Church', Catholicism has been presented as a necessary condition in order to acquire citizenship. Dissent from this position only came occasionally from influential religious figures, and was mainly voiced by individual parish priests working with Catholic associations, which had first hand contact with immigrants. Dissent was also voiced by representatives of other religions, particularly from the Muslim communities, but was mostly carefully formulated and without much impact on the public sphere.

Immigration as a threat posed to national identity has been discussed in the public sphere by another actor: the Northern League. The party opened a discussion on (Northern) identity in the early 1990s, although its position changed quite dramatically more recently. In 2008, with the approval of the law known as the 'security package', the debate reached its peak and the League's position became more extreme. The rhetoric used by the party's leader Umberto Bossi and fellow 'leghisti' was articulated through speeches, interviews, articles and editorials published in the party's newspaper *La Padania*, particularly in recent times. The

interventions were addressed to a non-specialised general public and Northern League's supporters, but more recently the League has broadened its target and has started addressing the whole nation. This new strategy is justified by the party's dual aim: that of acquiring political consensus in the rest of the country and that of making certain issues relevant at the national level. Thus the Lega has moved from claims to represent only a part of the citizens, to a new nationalistic rhetoric addressing all Italians. The key concepts of this new rhetoric are represented by a set of dichotomies used to portray what the party calls 'us' ('la nostra gente'), as threatened by 'them' (the immigrants). Such fears are expressed through the use of military metaphors and alarmist calls for action. Internal dissent within the party and the centre-right coalition is largely absent, instead criticism comes from the Church, whose representatives have often spoken out against intolerance, usually condemning racism in general terms, and only rarely referring directly to the positions put forward by the Northern League.

While at first Catholic representatives expressed their rejection of the intolerant positions of the new party and Bossi was very critical of what he perceived at times as a corrupt Roman Church, today the relationship between the two actors has become more ambiguous. This thesis showed how, to a certain extent, the Church, through its silent acquiescence, has legitimised the League's discourse on immigration, particularly since the party has begun to borrow the Catholic rhetoric on the issue and started fighting its battle in the name of a Catholic national identity.

While the position of intellectuals is isolated and fragmented, the Lega and the Church seem to pursue their deeply different goals by putting forward compatible (indeed often common) strategies and claims. They both present themselves as victims asking the state for protection and for a right to freedom of expression allegedly denied to them. Their discourses also converge around some central key concepts such as the right to preserve traditional identities and to

direct their solidarity towards those who are closer to them, as well as their identification of Muslim immigrants as the main threat to an endangered Christian tradition. As a result, despite the different register used and their different agendas, the Church and the Lega contribute to legitimise and reinforce citizens' anxieties and fears in relation to immigration, while providing the state with support for its increasingly restrictive measures. While the Church has in this sense only an indirect responsibility, the League, as a member of the governing coalition, has actively participated in the creation of an exclusionary Italian identity. Furthermore one could argue that the silence of intellectuals in this discussion has indirectly contributed to the consolidation of such an exclusionary attitude. The impact of these positions on state policy-making has become clearer in the last few years, particularly since the 'security package' was passed and illegal entry/residence in the country became a crime.

In conclusion, until 2008 Italy seemed to be reacting to immigration with ad hoc measures put forward from time to time to deal with single unexpected emergencies. All the laws passed until then, with the exception of the Turco-Napolitano, seem to have been aimed at regulating the job market in a protectionist way, with the result that they considered immigrants primarily as a workforce, rather than as human beings or possible future citizens. When taking into account only the measures passed before 2008, it can be said that Italy was not following any traditional model of integration, nor was it formulating its own long-term response to the phenomenon. Legislation on immigration appeared to be a confused mixture of temporary reactions and inefficient practical solutions (such as the recurrent 'sanatorie'). The difference between the measures suggested by the Centre-Right and those formulated by the Centre-Left is only noticeable when considering the early steps of their formulation, while they tended to converge after the first parliamentary discussions.

As showed in the last chapter of this work, since 2008 Italy has started adopting a clearer strategy to respond to the new arrivals. Such a strategy does not imply any discussion of integration, it is rather mainly aimed at making the Italian borders impenetrable. In this sense, if this turn is too recent to allow us to talk about a new model, it can be said that the country has definitely taken a clear direction, and is moving fast towards the creation of a highly exclusionary identity, in which a discussion of alternative ideas of Italianness does not feature at all.

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